THE WHITE-FACED PRIEST.

HOWARD PEASE.

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THE WHITE-FACED PRIEST

AND OTHER

NORTHUMBRIAN EPISODES.

"BORDERLAND STUDIES."

PRESS NOTICES.

The National Observer.

"Mr. Pease has the merits of observing well, of selecting the essential for presentation, and of really knowing his subject. You get the personal equation of Northumbria in the papers, in the tales a view of her sons in act. Whatever the Northumbrian's value from the social and political points of view; there can be no dispute that as literary material he is admirable. Is Mr. Howard Pease henceforth to claim him as his own? Hitherto the Northumbrian has inspired but the local author; his Barrie, his Stevenson, are still unborn."

The Globe.

"The name of Mr. Howard Pease is new to us, but his 'Borderland Studies' have a freshness and power which induce us to hope that we shall meet with his name again. The Borderland in question is Northumbria, and Mr. Pease appears not only to know it, but to appreciate it thoroughly. The sketches are all eminently graphic, though over brief. The tales occupy much more space, and are agreeably unconventional in motive and treatment. The writer's mastery of the local patois is apparently great. His volume is certainly one to be carefully conned."

The Scotsman.

"The book will interest both those who know and those who wish to know the Northumbrian character."

Newcastle Leader.

"'Borderland Studies' is a local work of distinctive character and unusual merit."

Newcastle Journal.

"Mr. Pease has the merit of having condensed in to a small compass the most pungent essence of the peculiarly characteristic scenes and people described, and his little book will, no doubt, find its place among the treasures of local record and tradition."

Newcastle Weekly Chronicle.

"Nothing more racy of the soil has been produced in Northumberland for many a long day. We have here nearly all the qualities of a novelist of the highest class. Turn where we may in the volume, the skill of the writer is conspicuous. In the description of nature and the analysis of character he is equally at home."

Glasgow Evening News.

"'Borderland Studies' contains many powerful sketches."

Newcastle Daily Chronicle.

"Here, for the first time, is an attempt to apply the modern method to our own district, still one of the most distinctive in England. Mr. Howard Pease has a sensitive, artistic conscience, which leads him to check his observations carefully, and to use every pains to make as literal a transcript as possible. Mr. Howard Pease's book ought to find many readers, not mainly, we repeat, because it is local, but mainly because it is literature."

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"THE MARK O' THE DEIL."

PRESS NOTICES.

London Daily Chronicle.

"*A Northumbrian Kipling . . . . . Early readers of 'The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' recognized the fact that we had one great living master of the terrible: 'The end of the Passage,' testified to the existence of a second; and, if we are not very greatly mistaken, 'The Mark o' the Deil,' and the two stories with which we have grouped it testify not less clearly to the existence of a third.*

The title story is one the offenceless telling of which must have been a matter of almost insuperable difficulty, the way in which the difficulty is surmounted provides unimpeachable testimony to the fineness and delicacy of Mr. Pease's art. . . . . Mr. Pease, like Mr. Kipling, turns, not habitually indeed, but still with characteristic frequency, to those aspects of life in which he finds either naked terror of tragedy, or that grim grotesque comedy which leaves behind it a semi-tragic impression . . . . . Mr. Pease's comedy is almost inevitably less impressive than his tragedy, but in its own way it is not one whit less excellent.

The story of the reconciliation—after a stand up fight—of the squire and the rabbit-shooter, is as human as it is humorous, and 'An Old Argy,' is a delicious sketch. His treatment has the robust directness of the creator of Learoyd, Ortheris, and Mulvaney, rather than the gentle winding into the heart of a humorous conception which is the more characteristic manner of the well-beloved scribes of Kirriemuir and Galloway."

The Athenæum.

"Seldom have we read local stories which have impressed us with a greater sense of their absolute truth of local colour and speech. And yet there is not too much dialect . . . . There is no denying that Mr. Pease has a tendency to choose gruesome subjects, but he has also the gift of being able to set his horrors before the reader with much eerieness and power. The story which gives its name to the book is full of horrors. Horrors as well depicted as those in 'The Judgment' are things for which gratitude is due, but Mr. Pease should not indulge in this vein to the exclusion of humorous stories like 'Hoo 'Twes' (How it was), which is excellent."

The Academy.

"Here we have literature, and of a valuable kind. This is a book to put on one's shelves."

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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

Pall Mall Gazette.

"He has very cleverly indicated the dialect, using just enough of it to give local colour, and not enough to puzzle us.

Once the 'foreigner' has taken up this book he will not readily put it down, for Mr. Pease is an excellent story-teller. He never wears his material thin by forcing it to cover too much space—he feels for them and with them, and he has a good deal of humour."

The National Observer.

"With the addition of the dialect these sketches are raised to the dignity of studies for which every Northumbrian will be ready to thank their author, so perfect is his comprehension of the subjects, so complete his mastery of the rich brogue, so delicate his handling of the simple themes."

Newcastle Daily Leader.

(London Correspondent).—"You will be interested to hear that at least one of the critics, and a very competent one, has discovered in Mr. Howard Pease—the appearance of whose new volume of Northumbrian stories was noticed in this letter some time back—a new and most praiseworthy addition to the Stevenson group of writers. Mr. Pease's book is welcomed as a revelation of unexpected power. He is described as one of the three men who know how to produce the shudder, being in that respect classed with Mr. Stevenson himself."

Birmingham Daily Post.

"Mr. Howard Pease, in his 'Borderland Studies,' attracted some attention by his masterly presentation of North-country life and character, but his new volume, 'The Mark o' the Deil, and other Northumbrian Tales,' is certain to make for him a far wider circle of admirers."

Newcastle Daily Journal.

"This volume ought to make its author's reputation."

The Standard.

"To the Northerner born these 'Heapstead' or Pit-mouth Studies come home with all the fascination of reality, and even over the Southerner they should exercise the charm that belongs to every truthful presentment of unsophisticated human nature."

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

The Saturday Review.

"Mr. Howard Pease's collection of Northumbrian stories, all of them original and well told.

Mr. Pease has managed his dialect with much skill, and it can be understood by anyone. . . . . Nothing in the way of ancient lore or traditions escape him."

Notes and Queries.

"Every student of dialect should have it on his shelves."

The Queen.

"I have not often read a more striking book, from the point of view of local colour and dialect, than 'The Mark o' The Deil,' which is the title of a single volume of Northumbrian Stories by Howard Pease.

Clearly there is material in this writer which might let him do for that district what Mr. Barrie has done for the Kirriemuir district, and what Mr. Quiller Couch and other writers have done for Cornwall."

The Manchester Guardian.

"There is evidence of really good workmanship throughout this book. The title story is powerful and gruesome enough to make it something more than a mere imitation of Rudyard Kipling. This is an honest and successful attempt to do for Northumberland what Mr. Crockett has done for Galloway."

Newcastle Daily Chronicle.

"As illustrations of character these stories are unmatched.

Mr. Pease has depicted the representative miners with a sagacity that rises into genius, and that one so comparatively young should have achieved so much is something to be proud of.

We expect, however, that at no distant day the promise of his youth will be realised by the production of a work bringing all his powers into the fullest play."

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

Liverpool Daily Post.

"A glance at the glossary may prove helpful, but once the reader gets introduced to 'Heckler,' 'Geordie,' 'Wor Tom,' the interest becomes so keen that the divergence into pure English, whether in description or explanation, seems almost to take away from the crispness and brightness of story or picture."

Alnwick and County Gazette.

"Mr. Pease—*Northumbria's Novelist*—has, in his first two books, written only of Northumbrian people and Northumbrian scenes. So far he has made these peculiarities his own, and all who love our fair Borderland will look eagerly for the announcement of further contributions from his pen."

The Guardian.

"A very good short volume of Northumbrian stories has followed the clever 'Borderland Studies' of the same author.

In this new book the local dialect has been adapted, and we think wisely, to the comprehension of a Southern reader. . . . . These clever and imaginative studies."

THE WHITE-FACED PRIEST

AND OTHER

NORTHUMBRIAN EPISODES.

BY

HOWARD PEASE

AUTHOR

OF

"BORDERLAND STUDIES."

"THE MARK O' THE DEIL."

LONDON:

GAY & BIRD.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE:

MAWSON, SWAN, & MORGAN.

—

1896.

To my Father,

A LOVER AND A COLLECTOR OF BOOKS,

THIS SMALL ADDITION TO

HIS LIBRARY IS

INSCRIBED

BY

The Author.

PROLOGUE.

In a former volume the writer was accused of an "excess of gloom," and in a later work of a tendency towards "the terrible," but in the present impression no such shadows will, he believes, be discoverable, and he can only hope that at a time when, as some think, the rechauffé Elder and the savoury neuropathic appear "usque ad nauseam" on fiction's daily menu, the following episodes dealing with the sturdy, independent, Anglo-Saxon character of the Northumbrian people may be found to please the palate.

If anyone is inclined to be sceptical on the subject of "Black Geordie's" feats, either as hewer or trencherman, as related in the text, it

may be stated that he represents a character notorious some forty years ago throughout Northumberland for his physical prowess.

It is said by tradition that he could hew a "score* of tubs" a day, in anything approaching a decent, or "canny," as he would have preferred to express it, "cavil."

Further, that he usually partook of two "pot-pies" for breakfast, and on one occasion demolished two legs of mutton for his dinner.

In the "Flight of the Lodger" again, "Temple Tommy" assumes the guise, and definitely adopts the phraseology of the late Mr. Gleghorn of Seaton Delaval—a man of the most singular piety, of the most kindly disposition, and consistently devoted, from his youth upward, to the cause of Christianity.

As the writer only met Mr. Gleghorn once, it may well be that he has done but scant justice to the closing scenes of a singularly beautiful life; at the same time he believes that his discourse as he

*About 8 tons.

lay dying was almost identical with that given in the sketch.

For this, as for sundry other information, the writer is very greatly indebted to Mr. R. A. S. Redmayne, Viewer of Seaton Delaval Colliery, whose knowledge of the pitmen resembles Sam Weller's acquaintance with London in being at once "extensive and peculiar."

If any reader feels surprise at the prominent part assigned to theology in the sketches which deal with pit life and character, he must bear in mind that the writer has deliberately chosen out this particular aspect for treatment, as formerly, in another book he selected the sporting side for presentation.

Either phase is distinguished by a like energy and directness, an energy and directness typical of the Northumbrian nature, though naturally enough the two strains are not usually met with in the same individual.

And now one word as to the dialect.

The remarks of an able critic in regard to a former work are here quoted, for they are at once true as regards any literary production that deals with a particular form of speech, and may also serve to excuse the writer in the eyes of the more patriotic Northumbrians, who may resent their ancient Doric being watered down to suit the taste of a "furrinor," who may even go so far as to stigmatize it as "a cruel jargon" upon occasion. The critic then pointed out, "that to reproduce phonetically a wholly incomprehensible dialect is but to worry and puzzle your readers. It may be said that this is impossible, for who could transliterate the burr? or who has ever been able to write the vowel sound "o" in the Northumbrian equivalent for "home" or "stone"? "Hyem" and "styen" suggests the real sounds to none but an expert. All the more reason, then, for keeping out of the way of stone walls, and leaving one's head unbattered! If the delicious original be beyond capture, why essay to zany it?"

And now, having at last set up his little

booth in the great mart of literature, and duly cried his wares, the author steps aside with the final hope that amongst his samples of Northumbrian lore some may be found to tickle the sinner, and some to please the saint.

HOWARD PEASE.

Arcot Hall,
Dudley, R.S.O.,
Northumberland.

GLOSSARY.

Aa, I
Aa's, I am
Aad, old
Aad-fashioned, old-fashioned, viz: astute.
Brass, money
To best, to get the better of
Buzzor, the steam whistle of the Colliery. If it sounds at 7.45 p.m. it is an intimation that the pit will be 'idle' on the morrow
Cavil—the quarterly ballot amongst hewers. As coal is so much more easily "won" in some seams than in others this method ensures a certain fairness in the apportionment of places.
Clag, to stick
Clarty, dirty
Checkweighman, an official appointed by the men to 'check' the 'weighman' of the owners
Clivvor, clever
Dee, do
Deputy, overseer appointed by the owners to superintend the working of a mine.
Dwam, swoon
Elwis, always

Fley, to frighten

Gliff, fright

Gobby, boastful. Pigg, Mr. Jorrocks' huntsman, it may be remembered, warned his master of the evil effects attending 'setting up one's gob.'

Hadawa, go away

Hirple, to limp

Hoggers, pit knickerbockers

Hunkers, haunches; 'squattin' on his hunkers,' this sitting in a balanced position on the heels is the immemorial posture of a pitman in his leisure hours

Ivvor, ever

Mevvies, maybe, perhaps

Ne, no

Neet, night

Nivvor, never

Notis, notice; to "get notice" is to receive notice of dismissal.

'Pay-Friday' and 'Pay-Saturday,' pitmen are paid fortnightly on the Friday, and the Pay-Saturday is always a holiday; non Pay-Saturdays are known as 'Baff-Saturdays'

Pigeon-ducket, pigeon-cote

Priest, a Roman Catholic or Church of England clergyman. This is probably a survival from pre-Reformation times, for the Presbyterian and Methodist are not 'priests' but ministers.

Reet, right

Relap, relapse

Sapling, greyhound puppy under 12 months of age

Shut fast, or Shoot fast, 'blowing down the coals without nicking.' Those using this method are liable to dismissal.

Staps, the strips of a barrel

Stagnate, surprise

Ti, tiv, tae, to.

Thor's, there is
Aa's warned, warn'd, I warrant you
Weeda, widower
Wes, was
Wey, why
Wheor, where
Wor, our
Yor, your

ERRATUM.

Page 14 for gizzing, read fizzing.

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THE WHITE-FACED PRIEST.

THE WHITE-FACED PRIEST.

Chapter I.

"Good evening," I said in reply to the curt wag of the head from my acquaintance "the Heckler," upon whom I had suddenly chanced in my stroll after the day's work was over.

He was sitting, as was his fashion of an evening, upon the top-most rail of the gate, by the road-side, ready to hold forth in his oracular manner upon any subject that may be brought under his notice. Usually he was surrounded by a host of admirers, who consulted him, as enquirers of old the Delphic oracle, and like those ancients,

usually departed, I believe, if not greatly enlightened, exceedingly gratified that such an epitome of hidden wisdom should exist in their midst. I understood indeed that they had recently manifested their appreciation by electing him to the post of check-weighman at the Colliery.

To-night, however, he was alone, save only for the companionship of his grey-hound, the "aad bitch," Bonnie Bella, who sat below him looking up at him with keen face and soft brown eyes, endeavouring, by an occasional low whine, to draw him from his rail and induce him to take her for some further exercise.

As he was alone, I ventured to stay awhile for a "crack," for I found his pawky wit extremely diverting; so long, that is, as there was no fear of it's being exercised upon myself in the presence of bystanders, who, standing round with elbows poised to nudge, and smiles ready to break open at a word, insisted on regarding every sentence he uttered as an unanswerable repartee.

The bells were sounding from the Church

which stood on the eminence beyond the Colliery, so, by way of opening a conversation I enquired, "And how does the new Rector get on? Is he a good preacher?"

"He canna preach a bit; he's nowt ov an orator," replied the Heckler somewhat contemptuously. It was a characteristic of his to look down upon everyone with whom he was not personally acquainted or identified in some way or another, and indeed so great was his admiration for the "aad bitch," "the wife," and the rest of his personal belongings, that he had little left for the outside world and "furrinors" generally.

"But he has a bit of gumption in him for aal that," he continued reflectively; "he wes passing us i' the road t'other night, an' he gie'd us good 'e'en, then, catchin' sight o' the aad bitch, he says, "That's a good-looking dog, that o' yors," says he. Bein' a priest, he mevvies didna ken the difference twixt a dog an' a bitch, but I thinks he means well, an' gie him a bit time, I'll back him ti fill his Chorch before he's done wiv it."

"The Wesleyan minister's a new man also, is he not?" I enquired further.

"Ay, he's a furrinor too," replied the Heckler, "an' a tarr'ble clivvor chep, I hear tell, but I divvn't like the looks ov him; he's far ower gobby for the job; ti listen tiv him taalkin' one might think he wes a member o' Parlyament, a Justice o' the Peace, an'—an'—the Judge o' the Waterloo Cup aal rolled into one. My marrer, though, he favours the Methody, for he says he likes a chep wiv a bit kyte (stomach) on tiv him; a good eater makes a good worker, says he, but I think he's wrang; I likes the wiry ones best mysel', they divvn't make a great show at their vittals, but they'll gan till they drop, like the aad bitch. Sae I've backed the priest ti fill his Chorch sooner than the Methody fills his chapel, an' seein' that the Methody's getten aboot six weeks start my marrer gie'd us a shade ov odds—five pun ten tiv a fiver."

"I suppose," said I, smiling at the quaintness of the Heckler's point of view, "that they

will have hard work at first, being somewhat handicapped probably by the performances of their predecessors who, between them, if all tales be true, sadly neglected their flocks."

"Ay, yor right there, the other two between them wes as good as a circus a'most, as ye might say, for the priest as soon as ivvor he hed his bit fortin' left him, hired a curate who wes oot ov a sitivation ti do the work for him, whilst he went aff playin' hissel aal ower the country-side, cock-fightin' an' racin' an aal, till one day his curate fell sick aal ov a sudden, an' he'd ti tak a torn hissel, onexpected like, ov a Sunday mornin'. He'd been hevin' a glass or two, ye ken, an' the Chorch-wardens had a tarr'ble job ti get him ti the vestry, whilst aal the folk wes waitin' i' the Chorch, lookin' at each ither, some o' the women half ways twixt cryin' an' laughin' an' the lads standin' a tiptoe, nudgin' each ither an' startin' talkin', whilst the chep who played the organ had come ti an end ov his repertory, an' wes lookin' aboot him like one o' them organ-grinders I-talyan fellers when he's finished turnin' the handle.

Well, in comes the priest at the finish, an' hirples alang through the sarvice somehoo or anither till they wes aal doon on their knees wiv him prayin' — mevvies whereabouts he wes caallin' hissel a 'misorabbil sinnor'," continued the Heckler, his face assuming an air of preternatural gravity rendered more emphatic perhaps by the slight contraction of the left eye-lid which accompanied it, "an' there he stayed stock still, whether it wes that it came ower him sudden that he wes a fair disgrace tiv his profession, or whether he wes ower mussy i' the heid ti gan on, I divvn't knaa, but anyways there he stayed, an' the Chorchwardens hed jest ti set the people awa' as best they could, nivvor even handin' roond the dishes for a collection nor nowt."

"Well, that wes the end ov him, he got the bag efter that, an' high time too, I'm thinkin'," concluded the Heckler.

"You're a Churchman, then, I suppose," I said, so judging from the extent of his knowledge of the late Rector's misdeeds.

"No, I's no Chorchman," he replied, "but mony's the time I've assisted the Chorch, for I's often given the aad priest a help back frae the public ov a moonless night, oxterin' him alang past th' pond, an' pitheap an' aal."

"But had he not a wife to look after him?" I asked, for I suspected the Heckler of exaggerating, and indeed 'twas well known that a good story lost nothing at his hands.

"No," he replied, "he was a weeda when I kenned him."

"Well, and what about the Methodist? You said there was a pair of them," I continued suggestively.

"Ay, ay, he wes a queer un, but I doot he wes a bit dotty i' th' heid the last year or two ov his time, for once when one o' the Circuit stewards went to call on him he flung the ink-bottle at him, cryin' oot as it wes the deevil, an' that he would exorcise him. He'd been ta'en wiv a swellin' i' the legs, same as cart-horses gets sometimes, I

b'lieve; they call it limpin-gets-us* or somethin' o' that species, ye ken, a maist displeasin' sickness I shud fancy, an' I divvn't wunner if he wesn't quite right i' the heid. He just sat hissel doon iv his armchair, an' swelled up, like the Missus' trial doughs i' the oven, gettin' bigger an' bigger, doin' nowt but eatin' an' drinkin' an' divertin' hissel wiv harmony. He wes a fine singer, I believe, an' a tarr'ble heavy player on the harmonium, though I nivvor mind hearin' him mysel. At the first the doctor he taps him, and efter that he gans aal ti staps like a beer cask when ye take the hoops aff it."

"Dear me," said I, "then I'm afraid there will be a terrible amount of work for the new men to start on."

"Ay," replied my informant, "yor right there, no doot at aal aboot that. There's a vast o' sinnors here aboot, aal sorts, big an' little uns, like harrins, an' same as them, 'ull take a vast o' curin'."

*Lymphingitis.

"But that wes the buzzor," he said abruptly as a steam whistle sounded, "and I mun be gannin' home. So long," he added as he curtly nodded farewell.

"So long," I replied, as I turned to continue my solitary peregrination.

As I walked on by myself I fell to wondering how the new "Priest" would get on amongst his rough yet kind-hearted Northern parishioners: if he were to make a good impression at the start all might go well with him, and the good he might accomplish would be incalculable.

But if he made a false step at the beginning he might never be able to recover ground, for I knew enough of the Northumbrian to be aware that he is both "hasty and hot," quick to take offence and tenacious of his impressions, though so warm-hearted withal that when once he has become your friend you may reckon on his friendship for a lifetime.

The new rector was a young man apparently, and it would be sad, I reflected, if he should waste

the best years of his life away, as 'twas said others had elsewhere done, by knocking vainly at a chained front entrance, when all the time the back door stood open, offering a firelight welcome. After a fruitless essay then he would probably give all effort up, become a soured, disappointed man, worse than useless in his profession where much would be expected of him, and finally, like the "swollen Methody," be driven to "divert himself with harmony," if he did not prefer to follow the example of his immediate predecessor at the rectory. The memory of the Heckler's bet came into my mind, and I smiled again at the quaint predominance of that sporting instinct of his, though I took leave to doubt whether theology sufficiently interested pitmen as a whole to induce them to take any active side with either "Priest" or "Methody."

Still, it was a good sign, I thought, that the Heckler had "taken him up," so to speak, for he was the men's representative in a double sense, and his good word was a passport to a "furrinor."

For myself, I looked forward to making the new rector's acquaintance, for there were no young men of my own age and position in the village with whom I could enter into definite companionship, and the long evenings in the winter were very wearisome. Possibly the apprenticeship to any profession is dull work, but that to mining engineering is perhaps the dullest of all when, as in my case, one has to reside in a pit village,—grimy, unsanitary, uncared for, destitute of all adornment whether of art or nature.

I had not been in the village myself above six weeks, and was only now beginning to get to know the men. They appeared to me to delight in showing their worst side to a stranger,—like schoolboys standing off, as it were, and carelessly watching the rougher of their number make trial of the new comer. If he gave himself airs, or permitted himself to swagger before them as some superior being from another sphere, their backs bristled instantly, and they became as surly as a backyard watch-dog. No amount of petting or

coaxing, no crying of "good fellow, then" would propitiate the suspiciousness thus unfortunately aroused, and I knew of cases where motives had been misunderstood, and good intentions had yielded evil fruit through some original inappropriateness of speech or manner. At the same time though, they were the warmest hearted people alive. Once convinced of the genuineness of your interest in them, and their reciprocity was extraordinary. Sow a kindness here and there, and your harvest was a hundredfold. Once you had been inside a pitman's home, had shaken "the missus" by the hand, and partaken of her tea and "singing hinny"* you were a friend for life. Even in the case of the "viewer," or the "maister" as they called him, who had but recently been appointed manager, and who was somewhat unpopular because he had introduced some new rules into the pit (previously greatly mismanaged through a former official's carelessness), they were careful to add, after soundly abusing him,—that

*Girdle-cakes, so styled from their gizzing or singing on the girdle.

they believed he was a "clivvor man," and certainly a "brave worker." There were also, of course, a certain residue of rough men who cared for nobody; whose one ambition, indeed, seemed to be to make this evident, but they carried no weight with the respectable majority, and were always coming and going, either being sacked or tiring of set labour.

They were, taken as a whole, an extremely earnest set of men. In whatever they took up they showed a positive Anglo-Saxon energy. Most had some sporting "hobby" or "pastime:" this one's heart was set upon homing pigeons; that other's upon dogs; a third spent all his spare time and most of his "brass" in backing himself to beat "anyone in the world" at quoits; a fourth would shoot sparrows in the same cosmopolitan spirit, and each and all were self-styled champions notwithstanding their occasional defeats, for which there were always a thousand satisfactory explanations. Others of a quieter temper were devoted to gardening, and grew leeks (the village had been

famous time out of mind for its particular variety) that resembled life preservers for size and weight; and, in addition to other vegetables of a dropsical appearance, had a special love for pinks and pansies.

A few here and there, in whom the old Puritan spirit was alight, gave their spare time "to the Lord," and sought after sinners with a like devotion to that displayed by their companions in their sports. One man even had collected so much money that he had been able to build himself a "temple," (as the wooden building he had erected was usually termed), wherein he welcomed all, — believers and unbelievers alike. He kept a diary, 'twas said, wherein he recorded the names of all those he had brought into the "narrer path," and on a Sunday night would recount his struggles of the week with the "aad enemy," who never tired of throwing impediments in the way of those who were being "brought" with difficulty "to the Lord."

All his holidays and idle days, when the pit

was not working, "Temple Tommy" would go his rounds, never entering a train, nor so much as taking "a cast" in a trap from a friendly driver, lest one of his sudden "calls" might be interfered with, which sent him hither and thither, like an apostle of old, at a moment's notice.

He, too, was a "champion," as his friends asserted, pointing to the tale of his conversions, but others said that a large number of those he had "gether'd inti the reet way" had lapsed into the old paths again as soon as ever the first effect of his untutored "hot gospelling" had passed away.

It was a strange, uncouth district for a young man to come to as a complete stranger, and I confess I thought the Heckler would probably lose his bet, for the new rector had only recently left Oxford, and was presumably a High Churchman; one whose doctrine would soar above the heads of these rough but kindly people, who loved a moving oratory and the hot eloquence of the human heart. "There," I thought to myself,

"the dreaming spires of Oxford town," here, the blackened stacks of pit buildings, a disfigured landscape pockmarked with pitfalls; tall chimneys vomiting smoke like grimy dragons, and everywhere the naked strivings after wealth.

No mediæval mouldings here, nor corbels carved with drooping heads of monk or nun; no mystic atmosphere, lit with the subdued glories of reverential art and fragrant with the memories of the devoted dead. About the crumbling carvings of that old-world town a soft breeze seemed to breathe, bearing, to adapt the ancient Platonic metaphor, from the abode of intellect a fostering culture.

Here, on the contrary, in Selaval pit village antiquity was scouted; all things were new, and most were jerry-built. The atmosphere was laden with the sounds of ceaseless activity, and intellect concerned herself alone with the requirements of commerce.

The snorting of the boilers, the groanings of filled waggons, the shrill warnings of impatient

engines at the railway crossings, all testified to the hot rivalry for wealth. The climate, too, was cheerless, for of a summer afternoon an easterly "haar" would frequently creep up from the sea, muffling the bright evening in a plaid of mist.

I was thus meditating as I walked along, when I perceived coming up the road at a quick pace a black-coated individual, wearing a soft felt hat. I observed him somewhat narrowly as we passed, for I had a shrewd suspicion that he was none other than the "Methody," and, indeed, his appearance tallied with the description briefly furnished by the Heckler in our previous conversation.

There was a look of determination in his face, backed by a square jaw, which pointed towards success; a fine nose, eyes rather closely set, an incipient protuberance under the fall of the waistcoat (the "bit kite" alluded to by the Heckler's marrow), and a somewhat heavy tread of the heels,—all were marks, I thought, of the man of enterprise and good business habits. He was

clean-shaven, moreover, save for a slight moustache, apart from which and a somewhat aggressive manner (as of one whose social status was not yet perhaps satisfactorily settled), there was nothing to distinguish him from a budding curate, fresh from the 'Varsity.

"Well," thought I, as I passed on, having offered a brief 'good evening,' "I admire the Heckler's judgment usually, but in this case I think he is at fault, for here is a pushing man evidently, presumably not Oxford or Cambridge bred, unhampered by any mediæval notions, neither a mystic nor an ascetic, but simply a good man of business."

Having seen the "Methody" (for I found on enquiry that my conjecture was well founded, and that it was none other than the Rev. Mr. Pearson whom I had encountered), I felt a keen desire to meet the "Priest," and compare him with the other. After all, I reflected, as I walked up to the Rectory, the next afternoon, I might very likely be mistaken in my suppositions, and the

Rev. Mr. Pulleyne, M.A., Oxon., might very well turn out to be a muscular Christian, one who would delight his flock with exhibitions of strength or skill in the gymnasium recently attached to the Mechanics' Institute. There was no opportunity, however, of my correcting or re-enforcing my original forecast that afternoon, for the Rector was out, and was not expected back till late.

As matters fell out, nearly a fortnight elapsed before I saw him, for I was suddenly stricken with the influenza and rigorously confined to the house.

Sitting up one afternoon, however, by the window, I saw a figure passing by on the other side of the road who was unmistakably a High Church clergyman.

"That's the man," I thought to myself, as I marked his low, rounded hat with the broad straight brim, and caught a gleam as of a silver cross depending from his chain.

He was somewhat under the medium height, thin, but not emaciated, and walked trippingly as one well pleased with himself and his surroundings.

He turned, as I was watching him, to speak to an old woman, and I caught a glimpse of his full face; sensitive, mobile, full of high purposes undoubtedly, I thought to myself, but no great look of determination or convincingness behind that glow; rather a slightly self-conscious elation, something of that simper not uncommon in young men making their début in their profession with a wonderful degree of self-importance. 'One rather likes it in a budding "sub" or politician,' thought I, 'but somehow not in a shaveling priest, for after all one does want somebody to fight and make laws for one occasionally, but the actual ordering of one's life must be carried out by one's self in the best way one can.

Every line of his body, every emotion on his face, thought I somewhat illnaturedly, for a fortnight indoors had given me the bile, cries aloud, "Yes, I know I am good; far better than Tom, and Dick, and Harry, yet I will not be hasty in judgment, but," and here comes a smile on a wave of the hand, "will make allowances."

He passed out of sight almost at once, then in another moment my door bell rang, and I felt certain it was himself come to call upon me.

The heavy step of the domestic stirred the stairs without; simultaneously with her rap she entered, and presented me with the Rector's card as she said, "Here's the Priest's ticket; an' he'll come up an' hev a crack wiv ye, if yor willin'. I tell't him ye wor a vast deal bettor, but lookin' tarr'ble shabby still; an' mevvies a bit cumpany wud do ye ne harm."

"Show him up," I said, smiling, for Mary's directness always diverted me, and was in itself a tonic of some power, "for I should like to have a talk with him." She disappeared forthwith, then returned shortly with the visitor, and having showed him in and dusted a chair for him, remarked, "I wes just bringin' up the maister's tea, mevvies ye'll hev a cup as weel?"

"Thanks," said my visitor, turning half way round towards me in a somewhat embarrassed manner, "if I may, I should like to have a cup,

but perhaps I shall be keeping you up too long, for I know how strict doctors are in cases of influenza."

"Na, na," replied Mary, before I could get in a word, "let him sit up a wee; he'll be gettin' bedfast like an aad wife else."

"Mary, or 'Mar-wie,' as she is more usually styled," said I as the door shut, "since I fell ill has taken entire possession of me, but I hope you certainly will stay and have a cup of tea."

"Thanks very much," said Mr. Pulleyne, as he took a chair beside me, "I have been calling on various patients all the afternoon, and it is quite hard work in a manner, for I havn't got used to the 'northern' pronunciation, and sometimes I can hardly understand what they say."

"How do you like them?" I said, "though perhaps it is scarcely a fair question, for they delight, I know, in showing their bad side to a stranger, and you havn't been here three weeks yet. I fear you will find them very different from your Oxford parishioners, and the country terribly black, desolate, and windstricken after Christ

Church Meadows, the Parks, and Magdalen Walks."

"Oh, but I think the landscape has a certain charm nevertheless," he replied, "with its breezy aspects and long stretches of field and fallow, lit at sunrise and set with the crowded glories of the sky. Last night, as I was walking abroad towards sundown, the pageant of the west was all about me: a clear cold wind blew from the north bearing great clouds, like pictured galleons, set with golden sails, across the plain before me as though it were an inland sea.

Even your pit buildings, with their black heapsteads and tall chimneys have a picturesque appearance of a sort: at a distance they might be taken for huge elephants lifting up their trunks to Heaven, and when they let off their great clouds of white steam one might think they were dragons breathing forth hot breaths, and as for the pitmen I like them extremely," he continued, and now he had grown quite enthusiastic, "the married ones especially, for they realise the responsibilities of

life, but the younger ones—the unmarried men and the boys—putters, as I believe they are called, seem terribly rough and uncivilized, and to delight in the profanest language. Still, young men even at Oxford are 'barbarians,' as we have been told, and I do not despair of them, for the warmth of heart their elders display is very encouraging, and leads me to hope that I may be able to do some good amongst them. Anyway," he added, "I mean to try, and though it may be uphill work at first I will not be discouraged."

"I am very glad," I replied, "you like them so well, for that is the only way to get at them. Convince them you are their friend and take an interest in them, and they respond readily enough. At the same time they are curiously suspicious, and if by chance one unwittingly offend them,—a single inappropriate word or action will sometimes suffice to raise a cloud of misunderstanding amongst them,—months may elapse before you can 'make it up,' as children say. Indeed they resemble the most primitive order of children in

many ways,—sensitive, unruly, and terribly stubborn when roused;—their very warmth of heart is oft-times an obstacle to peace, for they persist in forming their judgment on the most sentimental grounds. They pretend to an extreme radicalness, believing they have been robbed of their rights in some mysterious manner, though in their own particular line none can be more conservative. Introduce new machinery into the pit, and Geordie forthwith clamours for a strike.

I overheard the other night two of them conversing. It was pay Friday night, and I think they had had what they call their 'gills.' One says to the other, 'Aa's as guid as anyone i' the world, Geordie,' and his marrow, with a truculent wag of the head and a lift of the elbow, responded, 'Ay, an' so's aa.' 'Aa divvn't care for nebody nor nowt,' says the former. 'An' aa divvn't neither,' replied the second philanthropist.

Of course," I said in conclusion, for I saw the light was dying down from my companion's cheek, "I come across them in an official capacity, and

they rather resent officials as a rule, but after all 'tis a case of much crying and very little wool. It should be remembered, however, that I cannot speak with any very great experience, for, though I have been in the north before now, I have only been settled here about six weeks, and I can scarcely claim to have got to know them yet."

"Well," replied my companion, smiling once again, "you must not discourage me too much, and then, with a little management I trust to be able to repair some of the lamentable damage wrought by my predecessor in the parish."

"Yes," I replied, "I believe he did a great deal of harm in a way, for though he was not vicious, so far as I understand, he left behind him the stain of a bad example to which any ill-wisher can point with the easiest effect. They are used to generalize from a particular instance, and they love a 'score.'

They move so entirely in their own class that their intellects, though active enough, remain like oysters in a shell. On the pay Saturdays they will

go up to the town to see the sights; will toss their 'brass' right and left, and often take stalls at the theatre, but even there they move in company, and come back home again heartily despising the 'dorty little cheps i' the toon.'

Yet considering their strength of character, quaint idiosyncracies, and encrusted prejudices they are really at heart a fair minded set of men. The pity is that they rarely are allowed to see the whole aspect of a question: their Union bullies them, politicians flatter them, farmers and tradesmen are frightened of them, and hence their attitude is too often that of the thistly Scot with his '*Nemo me impune lacessit.*' But I fear I bore you," I added, bethinking me that I was monopolising the conversation.

"Not a bit, not a bit," he replied, "what you say is very interesting, and should prove helpful to a stranger like myself, new come amongst them.

After all, as their heart is in the right place I do not think I need be afraid, and I shall gird up

my loins to try to efface the memory of my predecessor, and fill the church with worshippers."

"I hope you will," said I, as he shook hands and prepared to depart, "but you must not, if I may say so, be too impatient to begin with."

Chapter II.

EPISODE THE FIRST.

Two or three days after this, and just as I was preparing to go out for my first stroll, Mary came in to announce that the Heckler was below, asking after me.

"Show him up," I said at once, for I felt that a "crack" with him would be very refreshing after three weeks spent indoors.

"Hoo are ye, Sor?" he said, as he came in after a most elaborate wiping of his boots on the mat outside.

"Rather dicky about the legs," I replied, as I timorously inserted my fingers into his brown clasp.

"Ay, yor aal that," he responded cheerfully, "aal that," and he stood back a pace or two, viewing me critically, as though I had been a horse, "but yor clay's not so bad,"* he continued, "and in another week, if ye divvn't have a relap, ye'll be lookin' yorsel again. But, mind ye, divvn't ye dose yorsel ower much wi' that doctor's muck," and here he pointed disrespectfully at some bottles on the mantlepiece, "but just take plenty o' mutton ti eat an' a good sup castor oil between whiles. That's what I elwis gives the dogs when they're sick, an' thor's nowt like it i' the world. Wey, thor wes a saplin' o' mine oot o' the aad bitch that wes lookin' as shabby as ever I've seed; sae the lad sends for the vet, who gied her a proscription, as he caa'd it, an' eftor that she wes warse than ivvor, an' aa says ti mysel, 'she's a deid pig.'†

*Clay, complexion, bodily health, the body. This was one of "Temple Tommy's" additions to the dialect. See note to "The Flight of the Lodger."

† An expressive phrase denoting a hopeless case, suggested probably by the aspect of a deceased porker. "Noo, canny Judge, play the right card, and its a deid pig," is the reported utterance of a former worthy Novocastrian Mayor to his guest at a critical point in a game of whist.

Sae I takes her in hand mysel, an' properly drooned her wi' the oil, and plugged her up wi' mutton, an' in a week she wes as gay as a two year old again.

"Wey, ye might as well toss yor brass inti the sea and hev done wiv it, as gan ti them doctors and veteran surgeons, as they caal theirsels, that's just in league wi' the undertakers.

"No, no, I've nivvor ailed any in my life, an' that because I've elwis steered clear o' the doctors, an' drugs an' aal," and with that he spat heartily into the fire, evidently quite relieved of his preliminary shyness.

"I've no doubt they're both excellent things," I replied, with some haste, for I feared he would insist upon sending me round a cargo of these medicaments, "but I'm all right now, all I want is some fresh air and exercise every day for a bit. And now, tell me the news, for I have heard nothing lately. How, for example, does your friend, the rector, get on? Has he made a good start towards filling up the empty pews?"

"He's made a baddish start," replied the Heckler gloomily, and I could see that his mind was running on his bet, "he's not showed hissel clivvor at gettin' off at aal. Wey, th' other night he wes takin' the chair at a concort on behalf o' the Bible Society, an' wiv its bein' pay Saturday thor wes a good cumpany at it, an' he says i' the course ov his remarks that they wes that liboral i' their ideas that they wud even print bibles for the Romans, who insist upon hevin' sartain things put in and other things left oot wi' a view ti sipportin' their own particular doctrine. It's just like Tom Hedley, the Conservative agent, I shud fancy," continued the Heckler, thoughtfully, "who's elwis gobbin' on that trades bettor under the Conservatives than under the Liborals, an' gans aboot wiv a coloured barometer an' a map o' stattysticks ti try an' prove it, but aal the while it's a mock'ry, for he elwis chooses oot the best year o' the Tories an' the warst o' the Liborals.

"Weel, thor wes a local preacher there, an' he cudn't sit still an' listen ti that wivoot makin'

his objections, sae up he gets, an' he says, 'Aa'm fair surprised,' says he, right off ti the priest, 'that thoo, who is a monyment i' the Chorch ov England, shud stand up there on a public platform an' back up the Romans i' their false doctrines an' aal, who, as aal folks kens, worships a man for their God, an' bow down ti graven imiges, an' ti gan an' alter wor English bible for the like o' them is just fair sack'ledge,' says he. 'Isn't thoo ashamed of thesel, an' disn't thoo mind hoo it is written i' the Revelations that not even the littlest word i' the book must be altered or changed wivoot the sartinty o' damnation?"

"And what did Mr. Pulleyne say to that?" I enquired.

"Wey, he justifies hissel in it, an' says that thor wes as good Christians amongst the Romans as amongst Protestants, an' that he hoped some day the two classes might worship side by side i' the same cathedral. Then the local preacher, he loups up tarr'ble vext at this, an' he says for his part he wes born a good Protestant, an' he'd die

that same, an' wud sooner gan ti the gallus than bow doon ti the Pope, whe wes just a man like hissel, an' yet gives hissel oot ti be a God."

"But the local preacher was mistaken," said I, "and surely he ought not to have interrupted the meeting in that fashion?"

"Wey, I divvn't knaa as ti that," replied my companion, "I's no theologyan, an' mevvies the preacher wes i' the wrang i' makin' sic a hurly-burly aboot it, but the priest sartinly made a great mistake i' justifyin' hissel as he did, an' backin' up a furrinor like the Pope, who's just a nowt, as I b'lieve, like the most o' thae furrinors; no, no, he's made a bad start, I tell thoo, for thor's a many folk believes that the priest's half a Roman hissel."

"Well," said I, "I think it is very unfair to Mr. Pulleyne, but I don't suppose it will really make very much difference to him in the long run, for he's a nice fellow, 'a canny man,' as you say hereabout, well meaning, and with his heart in his work, so you needn't look so glum, for he may

still fill his church sooner than the Methody his chapel, in which case your brass will be safe."

"Thor's lots o' cheps," replied the Heckler gloomily, "who mean well, an' yet clag their foot into everythin' that comes nigh them, an' thor's anuther thing that stands i' the way ov his success, an' that's the Methody. It's a hearsay," he continued, "that him an' the priest wor up at the college tegither, an' that the priest took the advantage over him, an' got him given the bag, an' sae t'other night when they meets for the first time, an' the priest recognises him, an' holds oot his hand for a shake, sayin', 'Hoo air ye, Mr. Pearson? I trust we may both work amy—amy—' suthin o' nuther, I divvn't ken the exact word," broke off the Heckler, "but"—

"Amicably, perhaps, but we'll say like two marrows, for the sake of clearness," I said, suggesting an alternative reading.

"Ay, that's right noo," responded my companion gratified, "thor's sense i' that, 'like two marrers' says he, but the Methody he claps his

hands behind him, and just turns his backside tiv him."

"Well, it was shocking bad manners, and it ought to help the rector at the Methody's expense," said I.

"I divvn't knaa," responded the Heckler, in that curious unconvinced manner of his, which was largely responsible for his nickname, "aboot that, for if the priest behaved shabby tiv him at the college what for should the Methody not gie a bat back again when he gits a fair chance for it? I knaa I wud if any chep misbehaved hissel ti me."

"Well, anyway," I said, as I moved from my chair to get my hat and coat, "I hope you ain't going to desert him, after backing him as you said you had done the other day."

"No, no," replied he decisively, "I nivvor hedged a bet i' my life, an' I nivvor will, an' I'm gannin' ti do what I can for him, but I doot that my marrer picked oot the winner this time:

that Methody's a powerfu' sort ov a chep, an' an ill man ti hev for an enemy."

"Well," said I, "we must hope for the best; but now I must be going out for my walk, or it will soon be too chilly for me."

"Ay, ay," responded the Heckler, again seizing my sore fingers in token of his good-will, "you ought ti gan oot an' get a taste o' sunshine before it's too late, an' mind an' hev a good sup o' the oil at bedtime, an' we'll soon hev ye ti work again."

"So long," said I, as we parted at the door. "So long," he echoed as he turned away, then, stopping a moment, shouted after me as a parting injunction, "divvn't forget the oil; it's champion for the influenzie!"

As I walked along at as brisk a pace as my weak legs would permit, I reflected upon his report of the scene at the Bible Society's meeting. "Of course," I thought to myself, "it is exactly what might have been expected to happen, but to a stranger, and one brought up at Keble College,

Oxford, in a wholly alien atmosphere, such an interruption must be extremely offensive.

I havn't the least doubt that the local preacher thought he was testifying to the truth by urging his objection: his very ignorance probably fosters his ardour, and upon the generality heat of conviction, even if absurd, operates far more powerfully than intellectual toleration.

As to the Methody, I wonder if there is any truth in the Heckler's 'hearsay.' In the first place, I should not have suspected him to be an Oxford man, and in the second it is scarcely likely that he would have been at the same College. However, if it is true that he is his enemy, he will doubtless have more chance of doing him an ill turn here than anywhere else in England probably, for the Rector's heart is evidently set upon his work, and failure or even non-success would grieve him terribly. The Methody, knowing probably the bias and temper of the men's minds is much less likely to 'clag his foot' into it, as the Heckler says, than the priest, and if the latter

makes a mistake 'twill be easy for the former to turn it to his disadvantage."

I was thus thinking over the matter, when a poster caught my eye with Mr. Pulleyne's name prominently displayed upon it, and, stopping to peruse it, I found it was an advertisement of a lecture to be given the next night in the Co-operative Hall upon "Evolution, and its bearing upon Belief;"—the Rev. Mr. Pulleyne in the chair.

"If I'm well enough, I'll go," thought I to myself, "and see how he comports himself. It's ten to one that the local preacher will be there again, lynxeyed for an opportunity to 'have at' the Rector again. Probably his friends have heard how he 'battled the priest doon' the other night, and will be there in force in the expectation of another encounter."

The next evening, as the weather continued warm and I felt stronger, I sallied forth, regardless of the doctor's orders, and made my way to the Hall to hear the aforesaid lecture. There was already a good company assembled, though it was

still five minutes from the hour appointed, and, looking around I could see a number of the more sedate and earnest order of pitmen there, several Methodies, the Heckler, the Rev. Mr. Pearson, and, finally, the bushy head of " Red Tom."

Now as Red Tom had always been a stalwart freethinker, and latterly, having lost his wife and only bairn (to whom he had been absolutely devoted), by some terrible accident with a parafin lamp in his absence—a pronounced atheist; I foresaw that the Rector might again encounter unexpected opposition.

A minute or two passed away, the audience sitting silent and stolid after their usual fashion till something should stir the hidden seeds of fire to life.

Presently the door at the back opened, and one of the Churchwardens entered on to the stage above, and carried out the usual preliminary of first altering the position of all the chairs on the platform, and then setting them in their old places again.

This successfully accomplished he returned to the side door, and, a moment after, the Rector made his appearance followed by another cleric and a lady, the lecturer presumably and his wife, the rear being brought up by the people's warden —a stout, red-faced farmer of the neighbourhood, clad in a heavily creased black tail coat, and bearing a large geranium in his buttonhole. "It's both Chorch *an*' State the neet," one fellow near me muttered to another, nodding his head satirically in the direction of the farmer.

As they sat down there was a feeble flicker of applause from below, and a voluminous outburst from the farmer on the platform. Then the Rector stepped forward, and introduced the Rev. Mr. Chrysostom Smith to us as an Oxford parson with a distinguished College record. Mr. Smith would treat the question, he said, largely from the scientific point of view, and he himself would eventually add some few words dealing more particularly with the religious aspect of the question. Mr. Smith had not been embarked very long upon the

sea of evolution before I was satisfied that he was a very able yet dull gentleman—one of those born to attain distinction in the 'Varsity schools, then never to be heard of again, but to be met with in the country, pedestalled as paterfamilias, and pointed out with distinction as 'having once written an article for the Encyclopedia.'

"I know that man," I thought to myself, as he forged ahead into the swell of chafing disputations as to the world's age wherein mathematicians and geologians sport like dolphins, "he comes from St. John's, Cambridge, or Balliol College, Oxford, to adopt the language of the man in the play."

Whereupon—and the room was close moreover—I believe I fell asleep; at any rate I remembered no more till I suddenly saw the lecturer sitting down, and helping himself largely from the decanter of water on the table beside him.

Then Mr. Pulleyne got up, and, after thanking Mr. Smith for his varied and interesting lecture,

commenced to make religious annotations, as it were, upon it.

Commencing with the Old Testament History he pointed out that it was not fair to judge of it in the scientific critical spirit which we might rightly apply to a modern book, dealing with religion or metaphysics; for the world was in its childhood then, and had neither the knowledge, nor the accumulated stores of experience which some three thousand years had left as their heritage to ourselves.

Antagonists, he said, as also half-hearted friends, were continually seizing upon details, and triumphantly enquiring "What can you say to that?" Delighting in the scientific learning of the day, they call for facts, and again for facts, in a domain which lies outside the sphere of mathematical proof. Then, on the other hand, if one applies to them for an explanation of the deepest and most wonderful things of life they have none to give; one asks for bread and they give a stone.

Next he proceeded to deal—and in a larger

spirit than I should have expected of him—with some of the recorded miracles of the Old Testament. The details, he said, might seem strange to modern minds, but the substance was beyond the alchemies of science. In some cases it was possibly a mere question of literary treatment, of style it might almost be said, or at least of forcible presentment; in others the subject might be treated allegorically in order that a wider view might be attained. Then, gradually losing his first hesitancy, and growing more impassioned, he dealt with the question of ideals, and quoted instances of great attainments under the stimulus of high purpose.

No nation ever yet, he continued, quoting from Mr. Froude, attained to greatness save under the fear of God, then after a fine passage out of Tennyson, he added to the splendid boast of Glaucus, that we are better than our fathers, the noble prayer of Hector that our sons might be better than ourselves, and finally looked forward, he said, to an evolution that would bring peace to

the warring instincts of mankind, and draw the whole world slowly nearer to the sky.

Finally, he emphasised as a fact borne out by the hard won experience of mankind through countless ages, the saying of King David, that it was but the fool who said in his heart, "There is no God."

Therewith he sat down, and I could see that he was trembling with emotion.

After a moment or two he rose up again, and enquired if anyone would like to ask the lecturer any questions that might have occurred to him during the discourse.

Save for a shuffle here and there, not the slightest interest or emotion seemed to have been aroused.

The men sat like a wall, impassive, silent, stolid; some with their caps still slouched over their eyes, and hands in pocket as they had been at the very beginning.

'The parson's scholarly eloquence was over their heads,' I reflected; 'quotations from Tenny-

son and Froude they cannot comprehend, I suspect; what they require to stir them from their lethargy is the untutored eloquence of a "Temple Tommy" pulsing from the heart, and borne forth upon a tide of personal experience.'

There was a slight movement on the platform which seemed to signalize a departure, when I saw Mr. Pearson nudge his next door neighbour, who thereon sheepishly rose to his feet.

"What aa wud like to ask at the chairman, is this," says the man, "hoo is it that the Chorch is sae intolerant tiv others ov a different persuasion! Noo, aa'l gie ye an example o' what aa mean," he continued, "for aa's a fair man, an' wudn't tak the advantage ov anyone wivoot givin' him due notice o' the fact. Weel, th'other day aa wes travellin' on the railway, an' thor wes a priest in the carriage (a Chorch ov England priest just the same as thoo is): it wes a smoker, by the ways, an' the priest hissel wes smokin' his pipe, an taalkin' tiv his neebor aboot religious mattors, an' aa owerhears him say, "Whenivvor aa meets wi' a

Roman or a dissenter aa gets taken wiv a shiver doon the back," says he. Ay, an' noo aa'l gie ye anuthor," continued the spokesman, warming to his work, as he saw the Rector rising from his chair to reply. "Aa hev a sister that lives i' the next parish, that's tarr'ble ill off, for her man, 'at she wes married on, wes killed doon i' the pit, an' left her wiv a big fam'ly; weel, one tarr'ble hard winter she wes nigh done for want o' warm clothin' an' meat. Sae she gans ti the priest, whe had the dispensin' o' charities for the poor o' the village, an' she says, she wud be main thankfu' for a blanket for her bairns an' a bit soup or meat ti feed them wi'. Are thoo a Chorchwoman? says he. "No," says she, a bit proud-like mevvies, "Aa's a purebred Methody like my feyther an' mither afore us," says she.

"Then," says he, "thoo gets ne blanket frae me, nor ne sup o' soup neether," says he, an' therewith he claps ti the door iv her face.

"Noo, tell me this," said the orator, now worked up to a pitch of excitement, "hoo can

thoo justify that? is that Christian or Christlike ti gan an' treat a poor weeda woman that gait? Isn't it the Chorch itsel that stans i' the way o' peace an' harmony?

"Aye, it is," said the orator hotly, answering the question for himself, "nobbut the Chorch, an' what's the need talkin' ov Evolution, an' sic like nonsense, when what we want is a Revolution; ay, an' we'll hev it too, aa's warned, an' then mevvies the poor will get what belongs ti them wivoot any distinction o' sexes." And therewith the speaker plumped himself down on the form, red hot with indignation.

There was an unmistakable murmur and undercurrent of applause and sympathy throughout the conclusion of the harangue—for question it could scarcely be called—and I saw from the way in which the men about me were straightening their backs and sitting up, that their interest was now thoroughly aroused, as the prospect of a hot discussion grew imminent.

The Rector, in replying, laid stress upon the

fact that matters in connection with charities were often unfortunately misrepresented, and that it was to be feared intolerance was to be found in all classes of society, but he believed, and here he quoted some statistics, that the Church had made greater progress in the affections of the people within the last few years than all the other sects together. He added that local charities were often so small that only some half-dozen individuals each year could be relieved by them: and that it was perhaps but natural, where they had been left by Churchmen for Churchmen, that members of the Church should be the first to be taken notice of.

In conclusion, he pointed out that it was surely not fair to meddle with the bequests of Churchmen, when Dissenters were left to dispose of their own property at their own free will.

Finally, touching upon the question of Disestablishment, (the introduction of which, as he truly pointed out, was quite alien from the issues of the lecture), he grew warm in his turn, and

opined that such an act would be a stain upon the national records, and he hoped, please Heaven, he might never live to see that day.

As soon as he was seated Mr. Pearson got up, (and my previous suspicions that he had prompted his neighbour to ask such a question as might lead to a political discussion at once received confirmation), and enquired in suave tones which contrasted favourably with the heated manner of the first questioner, whether the Reformation was not itself a "stain upon the national records," when it was borne in mind that the State then confiscated the bequests of Roman Catholics and transferred them without compensation to the Reformed Church of England.

The Rector, in replying, pointed out that the last speaker was surely under a misapprehension, for that all the State had done in the sixteenth century was to dissolve the monasteries which had notoriously failed in their duties and become corrupt, so that in the interest of general expediency and morality it was a wise, wholesome, and

most justifiable action. So far indeed was it from the truth, he continued, to say that a new Church had been set up at the Reformation, that it was well known that Roman Catholics and Churchmen continued to worship side by side for some years afterwards—until indeed the Pope formally excommunicated Queen Elizabeth. In conclusion he would add, the only real change effected was to transfer the supreme Headship of the Church of England from the Pope to the English Monarch.

The Methody again rose, and in the same suave manner as before, pointed out that there was a division of opinion on the matter, and here he insinuated that the Rector was deficient in his historical knowledge, for many of the old observances of the ancient Church were pronounced to be "superstitious," and many new innovations made, as for example in permitting priests to marry. There could be no manner of doubt, he continued, that the case of those who wished for disestablishment and disendowment nowadays was exactly on all fours with the Reformation pro-

cedure. It was a certain fact that the State had taken away the endowments of the monasteries of the ancient régime, and given them to whom it would, and what was to prevent the State of to-day acting in a like manner? There were numbers who thought the Church was still deficient in performing its duties, and wholly unjustified in withholding from the community at large what had been meant to be left to that community. The various flourishing bodies of Dissenters of to-day had seceded from the Church because of her notorious neglect of her duties in times past, and because of her apeing the ceremonies of the Roman Church, to which it was asserted that many of the so-called Anglican clergy even nowadays visibly inclined. There was a titter here through the audience, and it was evident that the speaker was deftly turning to advantage the episode of the Rector's "heckling" at the Bible Society's meeting recently. Finally, he demanded the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in the "interest of general expediency and morality,"

and quoted, amidst a general applause, the dictum of an eminent Churchman, "that the day of Establishments was past and gone."

No sooner had he resumed his seat than the stalwart form of "Red Tom" was seen to rise.

And now indeed the gradually growing interest gathered to a head, and, like a breaker as it nears the bar, seems to carry overwhelming impulse with it. The air had grown electric suddenly, and I myself, though of a fairly cool temperament, felt the strange feeling of excitement creeping up my back.

Some men further away had now risen to their feet, those nearer craned their heads forward to catch sight of the speaker's face, and a cry even now rose from some of the rougher looking men behind, of "Gan on Red Tom; howay wi' thoo."

Taking no notice of those about him, but keeping his eyes fixed steadily in the direction of the Rector, Red Tom commenced to speak quietly and in a subdued manner, but signs were

not wanting that he was but preluding till he had gathered his strength for an outbreak in full force. "Whiles thoo wes speakin' 'enoo thoo quoted the words o' King David, that 'twes but a fool whe shud say, 'Thor is ne God.' Then thoo went on ti say as hoo 'twes wrang ti criticise the Bible, for that it wes written in an ignorant age when folk wesn't as clivvor as they be 'enoo. Ay, but I ax thoo this, isn't facts the same yesterday as to-day, three thoosand years syne as in 1890, an' what hes thoo for answor ti this, that just as fast as knowledge increases sae belief iv a God gans back. Is Herbert Spensor a fool as ye caal him? an' Huxley? an' Tyndall? an' Darwin? an' aal the great scholards o' the age? What right has thoo or the Jew King nowther, ti caa men ov sic a calibre as them is, fools. Wheor's yor grounds for't, aa wud like ti ask? Wey, it's just an impittence, a barefaced impittence ti clag sic epithets ti men like that. An' noo agen, what's the explanation you priests gie o' the warld an' the life o' man i' the warld? It's just a nowt; at

the best it's but poetry, an' at the warst it's degradin' morality. Hoo dis a priest comfort ye i' yor affliction an' distress, think ye?" and here he turned round to the men about him, "wey, he comes an' he says, 'Thoo's a sinner, my friend, an' the punishment is sent thoo ti fetch thoo inti the narrer path.'

"Ay, an' what dis the Chorch dee when a man, 'stead o' behavin' hissel an' puttin' the curb ontiv his passions, just gives hissel aloose an' brings mevvies a dozen or more mouths inti the warld wi' nowt ti feed them on? Wey, the Chorch sits still wiv it's hands iv it's lap, and says, 'The Lord will provide.' Ay," he repeated slowly with a pitiless precision, '*The Lord will provide.*' 'Tis a pretty sayin', ne doot, ay, an' dootless it's fine poetry, but what's the prose on't? Wey, aa'l tell thoo: the half o' those bairns will be starved or beaten ti death mevvies, an' th'other half will find their way at the finish ti the Bastile* or the gallows, an' aal the while priests are gannin' aboot

* Workhouse.

wi their eyes aal shut ti the facts o' life, quoting this an' quotin' that, an' saying wiv a solemn air:

"Aa hev been young an' noo am aad, yet nivvor hev aa seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed beggin' bread.

"For what dee priests knaa o' life? Look at their hands, an' ye'll ken that they've nivvor done a handstir o' wark, frae the cradle ti the grave. They gan up an' doon wi' their wife an' their bairns, an' hev aal the divarsion i' the land, fed by the State an' well nourished, an' ivvory noo an' agen ye may hear them say, like the sentry cheps i' the barracks, 'Aal's well.'

"Ay, but aa ken what thoo'll say," he continued with a still more defiant ring in his voice, for the Rector here made a movement as though he were about to interrupt, "thoo'll say aa's in danger ov Hell-fire for what aa's sayin' noo. Ay, but hoo dis thoo ken that? When maa time comes, an' aa is put unner the sod, is aa ti be resurrected an' made inti flesh an' blood agen, an' aal ti be burnt wi' fire an' brimstone? Na, na,

tell that ti babes an' women folk ti steer them wi'; not tiv a full grown man whe cannot swallow sic an aad wife's tale as that.

"An' whe is a priest that he shud say this tiv a man mevvies as good or even bettor than hissel?

"Look at the last priest we had here," he continued with mighty scorn, and here I saw Mr. Pulleyne shiver like some delicate woman insulted on the open street, "he wes a fine example tiv his flock, aa's warn'd, aye clartin' on, an' clartin' on, wi the beer—and carryin' on forbye wiv his fightin' cocks an aal—a fair disgrace, not alone tiv his cloth, but tiv aal manhood as weel aa maintain."

He paused here for a moment, then, with a wonderful self-restraint, for the most ferocious satire was painted on his gleaming face, "*Ay*," he said quietly, "*but he wes a man o' God, an' aa's but a faggot for hell.*"

Then, without once having to stop even for an instant for the word or metaphor he wanted, he commenced to give some details of his life, and

the reasons he had for his opinions, and his views for the bettering of the world.

The man was a born orator, and as I listened to the smooth stream of burning words I could not but bethink me of the tapping of some steel furnace when the fiery white-hot metal streams swiftly, silently, irresistibly to its close.

It was not to the Church we must look,' he maintained, 'but to the State for any amelioration of the world, for the Church preached nothing but dry-as-dust Toryism, insisting on the out-worn feudal doctrine that a man should live contented in that station of life to which God had called him; but if a man did not hold with that, but rather tried to better himself and get knowledge to himself, how did the parsons treat him then?

Why, they said he was a Socialist, and an Atheist, and a dangerous person, and passed by on the other side with a text on their lips and the white of the eyes showing, and left him to battle it out for himself against the world.

As for himself if he had lived contented, he

would have been a drunkard like his father before him, who died through being always 'on the beer.' Many a struggle too he had against his temptations, and many a fight for the control over himself, but he always behaved himself, and did his duty by his work and his masters, knowing full well that he had none other to depend upon but his own self. Everything he had done he had done at his own cost, had turned scholard, and bought books, and books had taught him this, that Christianity had been the greatest clog of all to progress, for it had fostered superstitions and nurtured ignorance.'

"An' what d'ye think the priest tell't me?" he continued hotly, "him that wes here as Depity before thoo came inti possession"—and here he shot forth his words like arrows at the Rector fronting him on the platform—"when the dear wife died an' the bairn wiv her aal iv one black day. Aa hed come back frae my shift, an aa wes delightin' mysel i' the thought o' seeing her bonnie face agen, for she *wes* bonnie," and here his proud

voice broke for a moment, and his lips quivered, but with a wonderful effort he regained his self-control, and continued in subdued tones which were even more effective than his former heat.

"Thor wes nivvor anuther face for me i' the warld, an' often times aa swore ti mysel that nowt shud part us, nor nivvor sae much as a cross look or word frae me shud come atwixt us frae wor courtin' ti' the grave, an' sae it wes, an' aa kept maa word till that day came when on enterin' the hoos aa found maa darlin' lass an' baby bairn just blackened corpses lyin' on their beds.

"Ay, an' when aa wes i' the thick an' torment o' maa misery whe shud come in but the priest, an' he lays a hand on my shoulder, an' he says, 'Thoo musn't repine ower much, for 'tis a judgment frae God, an' thoo knaas that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' Love," he echoed with a bitter scorn, "love he said, an' talked o' love, but 'tis little he knaas o' love that can speak like that." Here he paused for a moment, then with a

strangled sob he added: "*Wey, aa cudn't even treat a poor dog like that.*

"Eh, maa dear lassie, but thoo knaad how aa loved thee, ay, an' the wee bairnie too, an' that aa wud ha died for thoo wiv delight if aa might. An then for a white-faced priest wiv his mincin' words thinkin' ti set aal reet—wey, it's a mock'ry,"—and here the strong man's utterance broke to a groan, and there for the space of a minute he stood, fairly battling with himself, then flung himself round, and strode forth from the Hall, brushing the men aside from him like flies, as he walked straight forward with his eyes like burning coals in the dark caverns that grief and despair and misery had hewn in his deep brow.

For a minute or more there was a dead silence. Then the Rector rose, and I could see that his face was pale with emotion and his whole frame was trembling, but whether from nervousness or indignation at the attack upon himself and his profession I could not determine.

There was a general movement as he rose,

and it was evident that after the impassionate oratory of the last speaker the men would not be ready to listen to any further utterance.

Mr. Pulleyne indeed had not got very far, before he was interrupted by various exclamations from below. Whilst being greatly grieved, he said, at the terrible domestic misfortune that had lately befallen their comrade, he could not sit there silent after the fierce attack made upon his religion and his cloth.

The question of the eternal truths of Christianity could not be disposed of by reckless assertions which to his mind were little short of blasphemous. For himself, he would have been glad to have met quietly with the speaker, and to have endeavoured to bring him into a better frame of mind, but he feared,—Here one interrupted crying, though in no unfriendly manner, "Thoo'd best leave him alone, he's ower strang for the like o' thoo," and immediately after another rudely shouted, "Hurroo, for Red Tom, he's bested the priest oot an' oot."

"Keep a civil tongue i' yor heid, thoo b——," growled the Heckler from near beside me, and in a word, the meeting broke up in confusion.

Chapter II.

"TWA CRACKS."

As I opened my window after breakfast the next morning I saw the Heckler in the distance leading some four or five greyhounds in leash, evidently with a view to exercising them.

I remembered then that I had heard the "buzzer" blowing at 7.45 the previous evening, so that the pit of course would be lying idle that day, and my friend as a consequence would have plenty of leisure for a "crack." The sun was bright, so I determined to take my constitutional earlier than usual in the hope that I might fall in with him, and so have a chance of discussing the

events of the previous evening while they were still warm in his memory.

I was concerned for Mr. Pulleyne, because I knew instinctively how keenly he felt on such matters. In the first place his religion was no mere formula, but a living thing for him, and he would resent any insult or slur cast upon it as keenly as another man might an aspersion on the character of his bride. For he was not the type of man who, when thrown by hostile circumstance, will comfortably accept defeat, and like Pontius Pilate of old, throw off all responsibility by the method of public ablution.

An idealist in the temper of his mind, and of a sensitive, eager, bodily habit, the Rector must always be pressing onward to some new scheme or plan, or he would inevitably sink into despond's slough and the morass of the hypochondriac.

Your idealist, thought I, is always in the right of it, and his influence enormous, though 'tis often somewhat in the nature of an after-glow; but for "quick returns" give me a sound, stupid, practical

man, with lots—"Hullo," I exclaimed abruptly, for half-a-dozen greyhounds here leapt upon me as I turned the corner.

"Down then, down," cried I, as I bestowed a hasty pat here and there upon the eager, quivering forms of the Heckler's "saplings," endeavouring to assume that firm yet affectionate manner which is the heritage only of the born dog-fancier. A whistle, however, here sounding suddenly, away shot the pack with backs bending like a bow, to where their owner stood some 200 yards off in the roadway.

I followed slowly, and no sooner had we exchanged greetings than the Heckler remarked:

"Well, an' what's yor opinion o' the last night's performance, for I see'd thoo wes there?"

"I believe," I replied, "that the Methody was at the bottom of the row, for I saw him give a nudge to the first questioner, and it was evident from his speaking that he opened out the path for the tirade that followed, for if he had not played the part of finger-post, the meeting would have

broken up with a vote of thanks to lecturer and chairman, and a growl or protest only from Red Tom.

"Ay, yor right, yor right there, for that's what I says mysel," replied the Heckler with emphasis, "an', sink me," he continued warmly, "but I think it wes a dirty trick o' the Methody's, for what wes he doin' but backin' up a chep who wes battlin' doon aal religion tegithor, Chorch, an' Chapel, an' aal? No, no, a chep shud stick up for his perfession, whativvor it may be, for a man's only half a man whe doesn't stick in tiv his perfession wiv aal his poo-wers. Wey just look at the aad bitch! d'ye think she'd ever hav win all her cups and prizes if she'd hedn't stuck her whole soul inti the coursing?"

"The Methody gies oot o' course," he continued more slowly, "that he's a Radical, an' the priest's a Conservative, but I divvn't see that that has much ti do wiv it, for the lecture had nowt to do wiv politics at the start, an' after all even if a

chep is a Tory he hes a right tiv his opinions, though they mevvies are as rotten as a paste-egg.

"I's aal for the disestablishment o' the Chorch mysel, for I divvn't see whey I shud pay for aal these priests, an' their wives, an' families; an' forbye that, I wud like that big stone ower the Chorch porch for my pigeon-ducket, but I divvn't see wey that Methody chep shud play the candy-man* aal the same, for he gets his wage from his 'flock,' as they ca'al their congregation, an' I'll lay odds he'd skin them if he didn't get his pay reg'lor—an' it canna matter tiv him, like it does ti my marrer an' me, whether the Chorch is disestablished or not. I's not a religious man mysel," resumed my companion meditatively, "I's ower fond o' dogs for that, I doot. Wey," he added, as he gazed fondly down upon one of his silver-coated 'saplings,' "wivvoot a dog I's warned I shud feel just properly stark naked. No, no, there wes Temple Tommy, he tried his hand at convartin' ov us, but I says tiv him: Will

*Bum-bailiff: the man who serves notice of ejectment.

I hev ti gie up carryin' on wiv dogs, an' coursin', an' gamblin' an aal? "Yes," he says, "I doot thoo must, for thoo's far ower much ta'en up wi' thae things; they're warldly blandishments," he says, "an' a tarr'ble hindrance on the narrer path. Hoo can thoo listen properly tiv a call frae the Lord when yor ears is full o' the yow-yow o' greyhounds, and the chink o' schoolin'* dollars," says he? There wes but the one chep i' the Bible," he said, "who, after he had once given hissel ti the Lord, was allowed ti keep on at his former ways, an' Tommy wes'nt sartin, so he said, that even he'd been properly convarted. I cannot mind the chep's name, but I b'lieve it wes Rum'un, or suthin' o' that kind. Mevvies he wes a dog-man like mysel, an' cudn't gie up the coursin'."

Here the Heckler paused for a moment, and looking down at the "warldly blandishments" gambolling at his feet, heaved a sigh, then shaking his head slightly, again took up his narrative.

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*"Schooling," gambling by way of pitch and toss. Two coins are usually thrown up, and bets are made on the chance of both coming down "heads" or "tails."

"Its surprisin' ti think how different folks is. Wey, thor's Tommy hissel, just wiv a proper gift for religion; its just meat, an' drink, an' baccy tiv him, I b'lieve. Then thor's mysel, an oot an' oot dog-man, wiv a reg'lor passion for greyhounds an' a tarr'ble inkstick for gamblin'. Then thor's yorsel, mevvies thoo hes a sly eye for the lasses, or a weakness for the beer, or—" as I made haste to protest, "cares nowt for owt but books. Then there's Red Tom, who canna abide religion at aal, but is aal for makin' folks better by the help o' Parlyament an' eddycashun. By!" he exclaimed abruptly, "when one has a bit time for a turn o' pheelosophy, as Red Tom calls it, what a queer world it is now—a tarr'ble queer affair, like one o' thae riddles the eldest lassie was askin' at us t'other day. 'Does thoo gie it up, daddie?' says she, wiv her eyes pokin' fun at us aal the while, as I sat there on the tub, half washed. 'Yes,' I says, after a bit wrastle wiv it, 'I does,' 'Ay,' says she, 'an' so did t'other cuddy.' Wow, but she's a clivvor one is wor Jeannie!"

concluded the Heckler, and straightway, forgetful of "pheelosophy" became absorbed in a retrospective admiration of his daughter's wit.

"So you don't think, then, that the Rector need be much discouraged because of last night's performance?" I enquired, for I was anxious to discover how public opinion tended.

"No, no, he mustn't take it ower much tiv heart," replied the Heckler, "for though he didn't come quite first-class oot i' the set-to, yet, at all events, he stuck up for his perfession, which is mair nor the Methody done. Mevvies he held his head a bit ower high, sort o' givin' oot that Red Tom had no right tiv any opinions ov his own at aal, but it's a free country an' a chep can hold what opinions he likes, I maintain, sae lang as he behaves hissel properly. Thor's nae doot that Red Tom bested the priest last night, but then, Red Tom cud best most o' folks at an argy, for he's a tarr'ble powerfu' orator, an' once his steam's up thor's no stoppin' him. No, no," he concluded, "Mr. Methody cam worst oot o' the show last

night, an' I still backs the priest to fill his chorch sooner than him, an' to fettle him proper at the finish."

"I am glad to hear you say so," I replied, "and now I must be moving, for the doctor says a fresh cold might set me back again."

"Ay, ay, that's right now, tak' care o' yorsel, an' divvn't have a relap," replied the Heckler, "a relap is a bad job always, an' the warst part o' the whole business i' 'the influenzie.'"

So we parted, and as I returned homewards I determined I would go and call upon Mr. Pulleyne that afternoon, and find out whether he was cast down or no by the discouraging circumstances of the previous evening.

The fact that the Heckler thought the Rector had borne himself better under the onslaught of Red Tom than when replying to the heckling of the local preacher on the subject of Roman Catholicism, was certainly encouraging, though in the first instance rather surprising to me. Yet, after all, I reflected, there are very few atheists in the world,

and what the men like in Red Tom is the genuine humanity of the man, his sympathy with the poor, his hatred of the smugness and hypocrisies of the well-to-do.

His vision is limited, his experience small, but he knows of the struggles and the hardships of the poor, and when he speaks his words are winged ; he shoots his arrows into the air, as the song says, and straight they fly into the hearts of his friends.

When I called in the afternoon I found the Rector in, and after he had given me a cup of tea he offered me a cigarette, and very shortly, after a few indifferent remarks, we found ourselves in the thick of an argument.

I had begun the conversation by offering my sympathy concerning the events of the previous evening. I added an apology for my own inaction in the matter, by saying that so far as my own short experience of the men went, it was better to let a man have his say out than try to stop him, for in that case they inclined to believe that you did so because your side was getting the worst of the

encounter, "and finally, to be quite frank," I added, "the man's eloquence kept me spellbound, as it were, for last night I understood, for the first time, what oratory, even in a rough form, really is."

He bowed to me slightly, then pausing for a moment, asked almost abruptly, "But you cannot surely defend the man?"

"Oh no," I replied, "not for a moment, but I do think this, that he is a genuinely earnest man, and, therefore, almost certain to be misunderstood. I mean," I added hastily, for I saw the creases gathering on the rector's boyish brow, "that apart from the absolute inappropriateness of the attack in the first place, and the total want of anything approaching to politeness to yourself, and the gross unfairness of his attitude in making you a peg, as it were, upon which to hang his tirade,—apart from all these, I think there was more fault to be found with the Methody than with Red Tom, for the Methody paved the way

for the other's attack;—that, I think, was quite evident."

The Rector said nothing, but I thought I caught the sound of a sigh, and then I suddenly recollected the Heckler's story of an old quarrel between the two. Mr. Pulleyne volunteered no remark, however, so I went on again with my reflections. "Of course I do not wish to be thought to endorse his opinions either, but I have had some conversations with him previously, and I have even lent him various books, and I can say this, that he is really, I believe, a seeker after truth in his own fashion, and largely partakes of the genus reformer. I even believe that had he lived some two hundred and fifty years ago he would have been one of the most earnest of the Puritans, a Sectary or Independent, of course, and would have fired his hearers with enthusiasm for a godly life, and terrified them with his revelations of the wrath to come.

"For it is evident that here is a man with 'fire in his belly,' to use an old but suggestive phrase,

who cannot but half believe, or disbelieve, as so many do nowadays, but must put his whole heart and soul into everything he says and does. One may even doubt whether he really is genuinely an atheist or freethinker. No doubt he thinks he is, yet, from what he said, it is evident that heaven and hell are very real things to him, not quite in the ordinary sense perhaps, but looking at the matter in a broad light, he has a real love of righteousness and virtue, and what he hates is lukewarmness and the complacency of the comfortable many. Most people are perfectly happy if they get so much to eat and so much to drink per diem; and they go to church on Sundays because Mrs. Grundy still continues to uphold church-going, but how genuinely they love righteousness and hate vice is a difficult question to answer. They call themselves orthodox, of course, but what precisely is orthodoxy? Is it not outward acquiescence in traditional routine? 'As it was, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, amen,'—and so home to dine on roast beef and

plum-pudding, with portly burgher and satin rustling dame.

"Some again are practically freethinkers, but would be horrified at the accusation, and why? because they are not sufficiently courageous or intellectually consistent enough to definitely thrash the matter out for themselves; they are cowardly, and prefer to take refuge in a 'facing-both-ways' attitude, neither wholly believing, nor disbelieving. It is only a few years ago since free-thinking was a bar sinister socially, and though that has largely ceased to operate, there is always the satisfaction of being 'on the side of the largest battalions,' and the comfortable feeling that after all if there is such a thing as hell-fire they are sufficiently orthodox to escape it."

"Then after all," here broke in the Rector, "you do defend the man who spoke so fiercely last night?"

"I dont uphold his doctrine," I replied, "but I sympathise somewhat with the man himself, for here is one who has suffered, and suffered terribly,

and for another, to take his own instance to whom probably such depths of feeling were absolutely unrealizable, to think to comfort him 'in the thick and torrent of his misery,' by a glib quotation, was, I think, something of a mistake. I mean," I continued hastily, for I again saw the Rector's brow contracting, "it is too soon to judge of Red Tom's attitude, for if one should not call any one happy till he is dead, as the old Greek sage held, so one should not condemn any man's attitude or opinion till one knows what ground he has for assuming the one or holding the other. Again, it is premature to assume that Red Tom's convictions are settled, and for my part I shall hope you may yet see him attending your services in Church."

Mr. Pulleyne's face brightened for a moment, then as the cloud descends once again answered slowly.

"I thank you for your kind wish, and I trust it may be verified, but what chance is there of it? for how can I approach him, after what he said

last night? I cannot, really I cannot, be the first to make overtures, for, putting the question of any personal attack on myself out of court, there is still left a genuine, really a genuine hatred, I think—for all your sympathetic explanation on his behalf—of all revealed religion.

"It may be pride, perhaps, but I should feel I was deserting my standard if I were to argue with him upon the reality or the unreality of the Christian faith.

"A soldier who is ever temporizing with the enemy is but a coward at heart, and never yet won victories."

"Ah but," I replied, "I wouldn't go and see him, I would leave him entirely alone, and eventually perhaps, when you have filled your church, you may come across him on a side wind, and then will be your opportunity.

"You see," I continued,—"if you'll permit me to go on with my defence of him, as it were;—the modern tendency is towards the practical and actual, and your warm-hearted, self-taught, but

withal ignorant socialist thinks that science and legislation combined may make a new Heaven and a new Earth for him. Again, I doubt very much whether the English people ever had much reverence, if I may say so without giving offence, for the priesthood, *per se;* they have greatly admired certain great ecclesiastics, and been devoted often enough and very rightly too, to their parish clergyman, but they are of too independent and critical a turn to accept what a man says unless they see what a man does. After all, from the Reformation onwards, Puritanism in the best sense has made England what she is, and the old doctrine still holds good that each man must 'dree his weird,' and work out his own salvation for himself.

"I must apologise," I here had the grace to say, "for inflicting this long tirade of mine upon you, but I have had to live amongst the working classes the last few years, and I think I know the general tendency of their thoughts and feelings on this subject.

"I have kept you quite long enough, however,"

I said, as I rose to go, "and it is high time for me to off."

"It was very good of you to call," Mr Pulleyne responded, as he too rose and grasped my hand, "and I hope you will often find time to look in on me, and give me the benefit of your experience amongst working men. They take life more seriously in the North, than in the South, which of course is a good point, but then again they have a more rugged or stubborn strain of temperament which renders it difficult to make an impression upon them. I have a call or two to pay," he added, as he took his hat from the peg, "and will walk so far of the way with you."

As we paced slowly along in the direction of the village talking as we went, we presently came to the corner by the end of the pit heap, and there on the little eminence of red slag stood Temple Tommy, appealing to a small group consisting of sundry of the older men, several women, and an uneasy lad or two who had evidently come to jeer, but having been overawed

by the speakers earnestness knew neither to go nor stay. He was pleading with them for their souls as we passed, and I could note the tremor of his voice vibrating to the emotion that possessed him as a violin to the passion of its player; his head was bare, and from his trusting, child-like eyes, shining like liquid sapphires, stole unobserved tears. "Why should they ever harden their hearts and stop their ears, and torment themselves with daily cares, when underneath each one of them ran the deep current of unchanging love which, did they but trustingly commit themselves thereto; would bear them over all the rocks and perils of life to their desired Haven. Though invisible, it was yet nearer to us than breathing, and closer than hands and feet." Then, with a sudden change from the highest mysticism to the plainest of prose, so surprising to one of higher education, but so natural in a self-taught theologian, the speaker turned from quotation to explain to his audience, in their own and his primitive phraseology, the doctrine of the Trinity.

He had seen, he said, that very morning a shop-boy washing the window panes of the shop-front with water from a "scooter," (squirt) and it had been at once borne in upon him, as he stood a moment to gaze, that here was the illustration he had so often sought for of the working of the "Three in One" and "One in Three." The water was the cleansing power o' the Holy Ghost, the "scooter" was the Lord Jesus, an' the boy—" Here an exclamation almost of disgust from my companion diverted my attention, and turning quickly I caught an expression as of physical pain on his face. "I suppose," he said, after a pause of a moment or two, "that the man is really a good Christian, and does good in his way, but to reduce the great mysteries of the Church which require the carefullest exegesis even at the hands of the most erudite and highly-trained Christian intelligences to such crude and uncouth metaphor appears to me to be little short of blasphemy."

"What will you have?" I responded, "the days of the ancient 'economy' are over. 'Tis the

era of democracy, and so long as the spirit be reverent, one must be content to put up with an external roughness."

"I fear," he said, with a sudden flash of light into his own character, "I fear I am too mediæval: either that, or too premature perhaps, for I feel strongly that the present state of doubt and unrest, evil speaking and open blasphemy, cannot endure, and the twentieth century may, as I have often dreamed and prayed, open out with an ampler horizon and a clearer faith."

"We can but hope so," I replied, "but even in the present the out-look is not so dark as many insist. There never was a time when people felt so keenly for the sufferings of others, or displayed so much charity both in thought and in act. Grant that it is possibly the result of indifference, or lack of faith, but for my own part I welcome the effect when I think of the burnings, brutalities, and blasphemies of the ages of Faith."

We had now come to the point where our

paths diverged, so without further conversation we bade each other "good night," and proceeded on our several ways.

Chapter III.

IN WHICH THE HECKLER APPEARS LIKELY TO LOSE HIS BET.

I FOUND so much to do on returning to my work again, both above and below ground, that I saw but little of Mr. Pulleyne for the next few weeks. From two or three indications, however, I gathered that he was not making progress: that the Methody on the contrary had so far altogether eclipsed him in popular favour and general esteem.

I was returning home from the office later than usual one evening, and as I passed the Chapel doors I noticed a crowd of people were collected, and my ears caught an echo of the

weird and harrowing sounds that invariably accompany the tuning of a brass band. Staying my steps for a moment I enquired what performance was going to be held that night. "We're gannin to hav a gran' concort an' ora-tory-o i' wor Chapel the neet," was the ready response from a high-waisted, red-cheeked 'wife' standing near me, "an' wor Wull's gannin ti play the sarpint. By! an' he can make a noise on her too; ay, aa's warn'd but he's a gran' player."

The Methody, thought I to myself as I walked slowly onward, has certainly got a good start, and as far as an immediate success is concerned he has assuredly outstripped the Rector.

He's a clever fellow undoubtedly; knows the temperament of the people, and has the right democratic twang. Novelty is the desire of the day, and here in a pit village is Novelty with a capital N.

Fancy "Israel in Egypt" in a small pit chapel! 'Tis small wonder if he fill his seats.

A few days after this again I chanced to over-

hear a conversation down the pit which bore another testimony to the progress Mr. Pearson was making in the village; which abundantly showed moreover the instinct of the "good man of business" so necessary to worldly success in the present commercial age.

I happened to be squatting close into the corner of a rock, waiting for a "shot" to be fired, and I could not have avoided hearing, even if I had wished to do so, the conversation of two men chaffing a third, whom I eventually discovered by his voice—as well as by what transpired in their converse—to be Jim Nicholson, a rolleyman down the pit, but above ground, and in his spare hours, a painter to trade.

"Sae thoo's gan an' desarted the Chorch, an' turned Methody!" said one, and from his intonation I felt sure he was bent on raillery. "An' hoo she'll do then, I'm wunderin'? Is she gannin' ti close her doors same way as a Bank when folk hes lost confidence i' the consarn, or does the priest want a vote o' confidence, like the Prime

Minister i' Parleyment, noo that he's lost one ov his most influentyal supporters? By the ways," continued the voice with a chuckle, "wes thoo ivvor inside o' the Chorch? Aa ken thoo's a Chorchman, because thoo's elwis said sae, but wes thoo ivvor inside o' the buildin', that's what aa want ti be at." Another low chuckle sounded in the darkness, and I knew the last speaker had nudged his marrow and awakened his expectation for a ripe display of wit.

There was silence for a moment or two, then after a rasp of expectoration, another voice replied gruffly from further away. "Ay, aa *wes* a Chorchman, tho' aa divvn't exactly remember noo ivvor havin' been there lately; aa mind aa wes there when aa wes baptized as a babby." "But thoo canna mind that," expostulated the first voice, "for thoo canna have been mair nor above three weeks old, an' yor eyes were liklies still closed then, same as puppies is when they're born. Does thoo mind being born blind?" continued the voice suggestively.

"Ho-way," was the reply, a trifle gruffer than before, followed by a chunk of coal aimed blindly through the murky atmosphere, "divvn't thoo try ti play the comic ower me. Maa mither wes a tarr'ble shy woman, sae dootless aa may hev been born wi' the blinkers on, for aa've elwis been notorious for the quality o' maa manners. But what aa says aboot tornin' Methody's just this. Aa gans where aa's weel treat. The Methody, he comes alang, an' he speaks us civil, an' he gies us a job, an' efter aa'd painted his chapel an' his hoose for'm, aa says tiv him: 'Thoo'd like us ti torn Methody, noo,' 'Aye,' says he, 'aa wud, an' I'd like that bairn o' yors that sings sae weel ti cum ti Chapel also.' 'Weel,' say I, 'thoo's treat us weel, sae aa'll torn Methody, tho' maa fam'ly's elwis been pure bred Chorchmen up till noo, an' the lad, he shall gan ti Chapel, an' sing till he's black i' the face, an' he's the best singer i' the districk, search here and there. Wey, aa'd back him ti beat—'"

Just at that moment a low rumble sounded

and in a moment leapt into a roar; a crash of falling coal shook the uneven floor,—a shower of debris fell like light rain far and wide, whilst a thick and choking smoke blindly crawled overhead.

The "shot" had been fired, and Jim Nicholson's challenge was forgotten.

This was only one amongst several bits of gossip that chance had put in my way, and as pitmen always talk more openly down the pit than anywhere else I had no doubt that this represented an actual occurrence.

Shortly after this I met Mr. Pearson himself, and the impression I took away with me after our interview, abundantly confirmed the opinion I had previously formed of his character.

There was to be a demonstration shortly in connection with the Jubilee of one of the Miner's Funds, and both he and I had been asked to take part in it.

The Rector, on the other hand, I found, was not invited to share in the proceedings, and I

gathered from Mr. Pearson's veiled allusions that he regarded the incident as in some sort of a triumph for himself.

Our talk, which had at first been merely concerned with the details of the demonstration, became gradually more general, and it was evident that Mr. Pearson was very well satisfied with the progress he had already made, and inclined to rate the ability of Mr. Pulleyne (against whom it was easy to see he had a distinct prejudice) very low.

The rumour that the Rector and himself had been at Oxford together was quite correct he said, but their connection had not been a pleasant one, he hinted indeed that he had not received very generous treatment from him, and so, as it was evidently a distasteful topic, I forebode from further curiosity at the time, though I must confess I took measures to gratify it later by mentioning the matter to the Rector, and extracting some particulars from him which did not at all, I was pleased to find, bear out Mr. Pearson's narration.

Mr. Pearson, as our talk progressed, pro-

claimed himself a "modern of the moderns," stigmatizing the anglican ritual as reactionary, and asceticism as the "cast clout" of mediævalism, totally unbecoming to the mood of to-day. He was all for organization: for bringing the Churches into closer touch with the people; for democracy, in short, in connection with all institutions whether lay or clerical. He advocated disestablishment and disendowment, he said, because with its specious air of antiquity, its feudal endowments and ordered hierachy, the Church of England was to-day a clog to progress and a hindrance to reform.

He was an ardent co-operator, moreover, and when finally I took my leave of him I could not but feel impressed by the energy and practical directness of the man, though I confess I felt a certain regret at his choice of a profession, for the self-sacrificing view of life which one looks for in a clergyman—no matter what denomination he may be of—was in him vastly conspicuous by its absence. I should mention, by the way, for it was

of importance subsequently, that he lent me a book that same evening bearing on one of the many subjects touched upon in our conversation. This book I still have, for I never had an opportunity of returning it to him.

Chapter IV.

EPISODE THE SECOND.

Within a day or two after the interview recorded in the last chapter, I was unexpectedly summoned home on account of the serious illness of my father. He had been ailing for some time, and at last, when it was too late, had allowed my mother to send for the doctor. "Angina pectoris," had been the report, and though he might linger on some months longer, death was possible at any moment.

Contrary to the physician's opinion, however, my father shortly made a wonderful rally, and actually persisted in coming down stairs again, so

that I had even packed my portmanteau to return Northward, when a sudden swoon on his part revived our gloomiest anticipations.

He was carried upstairs unconscious, and died within an hour. As one of his executors I was busily employed for some considerable period afterwards, and five months had elapsed before I could again think of returning to my work in the North.

All through this long period of care and anxiety my thoughts frequently recurred to Mr. Pulleyne. I wondered how he was progressing, whether he was still as much in love with his work as ever, or whether discouragement had continued to blight his early hopes.

Just before I left I received a ragged, ill-written epistle from the Heckler, from which I gathered that matters had not gone at all well with the Rector lately, and that physically his health was much impaired.

The note, however, was so full of extra matter about the pit, his "saplings," a recent reduction

of wages, and the probability of a strike, that exactly what had brought matters to a head, and how far the Rector was blameworthy was beyond me to determine.

The first person I saw, however, on arriving at the station was the Heckler himself, who was apparently seeing a greyhound off, not come to greet myself on my return.

I think I was mistaken on the point, though, for I was not more than about twenty paces from the station when I was suddenly accosted by him from behind.

"I's come ti meet thoo," he cried, as he grasped me by the hand, "ti gie thoo a bit o' welcome back again, for thoo's almost a stranger here noo, but I was bound ti see that the guard was takin' proper care o' that greyhound pup, for he's easy worth £50 ye ken. An' hoo's aal wi' thoo?" he enquired as he wrung my hand again.

Having duly replied and made the proper enquiries in my turn, I asked for some news of the Rector.

"I was just coming ti that," he said, as he drew me somewhat aside, his face assuming his expression of mysterious responsibility, "an' it's a bad business for him—ye ken whom I mean, the priest," and he nodded vaguely in the direction of the rectory.

"I divvn't mind lossin' my brass ower him, an' that's clean gan noo any ways, but I do objeck ti not hevin' had a run for my dollars—an' a canny lad like him too."

"Thoo's been awa'" continued he in explanation, "an' mevvies thoo disna ken, but thoo'll be properly horrified—same as I was mysel—when thoo hears that thor's a lass inside ov his hoos wiv a bairn. I divvn't suppose that the priest has ivvor had ony dealings wiv her; in fac' his hoos-keeper tell't my missus that he'd nivvor clapped eyes on her before, but findin' her leanin' on his gateway late one afternoon four or five days back, lookin' tarr'ble faint-like an' strange seemin', he takes her inti the hoos ti gie her a bit rest an' some refreshment, when doon she flops on the floor, an'

sae at the finish there was the doctor sent for, an' anither little stranger brought inti the world. It seems from what's said that the poor lass was come here on her ways seekin' the lad that done her the harm, an' as she's better quality than what the lads here 'ud be after, folks' tongues is waggin' and scandalizin' the priest. She's a furrinor seemingly, from her way o' talkin'—mair like yorsel an' the priest than us hereaboot, an' hes come a lang journey from the South somewhere. Ay, an' aal the wives will be at it noo, I's warn'd, clockin' awa' like a passel o' hens. But what stirs me the most is to see the Methody gannin' prancin' roond like a warhorse, his nostrils just liftin' wi pride."

"It's unfortunate, perhaps," said I thoughtfully in reply to his narrative, "and very unpleasant, but in a week's time she will be able to be moved, I suppose, and there'll be an end of the talk, I hope, when she goes away, poor thing. It seems to me disgraceful," I added, "that a man cannot act like a Christian and a gentleman with-

out all the senseless people of the place making a scandal out of it."

"It's human natur," replied the Heckler, sententiously, "just human natur—a tarr'ble curious kind ov a cattle, but the little priest, he's ower kind an' good for this world, an' not near aad-fashioned enough, an' that's the truth. Wey, if he'd been clivvor noo, he'd ha' just waved his hand at the lass hangin' on the gate, an' shouted oot, 'Hadawa my canny lass, hadawa; if thoo wants any assistance gan ti the Methody, who lodges i' the big white hoos, an' he'll help thoo.' If he'd done that noo, he'd hev trapped the Methody nicely, I's warn'd, an' then mevvies," continued he with a sigh, "I'd hev winned my brass back after all."

This extremely practical suggestion fairly set me smiling. "Well," I said, "it's too late now, but I must go in and have a talk with the Rector, and see what can be done."

Bidding the Heckler adieu for the present, I set off for my lodgings, bethinking me that I had

better have something to eat, and rid myself of travel stains before calling upon Mr. Pulleyne.

It was nearly dark as I approached my old rooms, and I was just in the act of putting down my bag in order to open the door, when I was accosted from behind. "Good evening," a keen voice said, and turning I recognised Mr. Pearson. "Good evening," I replied, thinking he was looking unusually belated. "Perhaps you will be going along to the Rectory shortly," he said, "Mr. Pulleyne's not been at all well since you've been away apparently, though 'tis said he refuses to see the Doctor or anyone else. I wonder what is precisely the matter?" and he peered at me meaningly.

"He's knocked himself to bits with overwork and worry," I answered shortly, "he's a saint, or next door to it, and that's what's the matter with him." "A curable disease, though, a man of the world might say," sneered my opposite, and a very nasty and triumphant smile shewed in the gleam of his eye, "and indeed, it is publicly

reported that he has recently taken speedy means of curing it." "Good-night," said I abruptly, as I stepped inside and shut the door to with a slam, for had I stayed without I feared I should have had to strike him in another moment.

I sat myself down to supper, fuming with an indignation which soon gave way to a great uneasiness concerning the condition of my friend, for so I had come to consider him in spite of the slightness of our acquaintanceship, so much had the charm of his personal goodness appealed to me, and so greatly had the thought of his unmerited isolation affected my imagination.

After washing, and changing my clothes, I sat down to partake of some supper, wondering all the while what I could say to Mr. Pulleyne, and how I might best advise him in the somewhat awkward circumstances of the case.

I had addressed a query or two to my landlady, who was, as I was well aware, one of the greatest gossips of the village, and she had at once overflowed with a pent up steam of general hearsay

and vulgar talk. "Everybody," she averred, "was 'scandalizing the poor young man;' not but what she thought he was being unfairly treated, but he wouldn't listen to no reason in the matter, and him being unmarried, it wasn't in human nature not to talk about the situation. One of the Churchwardens had spoken to him about the woman, and all he got for a reply was the question, 'whether he was a Christian man?' Even the 'commoner sort' had begun to revile him, it seemed, and she couldn't make out what would be the end of the matter."

It appeared that the Rector had been passing through the village late one night, and had endeavoured to separate a drunken pitman and his wife—both well-known ne'er-do-wells and drunkards—who were fighting out their differences in the open air.

All he got for his zeal, apparently, was abuse from both of them, and the woman had yelled after him, as he sadly gave up his attempt at peace-making. "Thoo'd better gan hame thysel, an'

mak' that poor hussy o' thine an honest woman afore thoo cooms setting up thy gob 'twixt a wedded man an' his wife. For shame o' thysel!"

All this of course furnished me with additional food for reflection, and I sat thinking on all I knew of the Rector and Mr. Pearson at great length. I should say that I had extracted at one time and another some details of Mr. Pearson's career at Oxford which appeared to have been somewhat summarily terminated at the end of his 3rd year. There had been a woman in the case, and I gathered that he had been sent down, though it appeared he had married her afterwards, (at any rate the Rector, determined to put the best aspect on the affair he could, believed he had done so) and taken to teaching in the first instance for his livelihood. What happened to her afterwards; whether she had died, or, the union proving unhappy, they had separated, the Rector did not know, nor indeed did he vouchsafe more than the barest information to me, for he was evidently very desirous that nothing he might let fall should

damage the Methody, but I had put two and two together, as the saying is, and some vague remarks of Mr. Pearsons himself had corroborated the result I had arrived at.

It was likely then in the present unfortunate condition of affairs that Mr. Pearson would make the utmost use of his opportunity. I had even gathered that Mr. Pearson and the Rector, though of different Colleges, had had rooms in the same set of lodgings at Oxford, and that the latter had been in some way connected, as a witness presumably, in the charge against him. This was only surmise on my part, however, but if true, it was clear that the Methody would be likely to make the utmost use possible of the present scandal and make matters as disagreeable as possible for Mr. Pulleyne. By stealthy hints and dexterous whispering he might be able to do a great deal of mischief: eventually perhaps he might even force him to exchange his living. The Rector, as I knew full well, was far too good a Christian to retaliate, witness his having extorted

a promise from myself of secrecy on what little information he had accorded me.

I sat so long reflecting on all this that I had quite forgotten my intended visit to the Rectory; suddenly, however, a hurried stumbling sounded on the stairs, and I felt instinctively it must be the Heckler come round to enquire what I had learnt from the Rector, and what was my view of the general situation.

He knocked, but without waiting for a reply, burst hastily into the room. "Ho-way," he cried, as he saw me still sitting over the supper table, "ho-way wi' thoo, an' gan an' see him, for he's tarr'ble bad the neet, warse nor I've seen him yet. I've constitooted mysel sort ov overman tiv him lately, but I've never seen him sae bad as he is the neet. He keeps the windie ov his libiarie open, ye ken, ov an evenin' sae that I've had a good look at him frae the ootside noo an' again to see hoo he's keepin up. But the neet he was warse than ever before; he cudn't bide still an instant; noo he wud try to caalm hissel wiv a

bit o' readin', but twes no use—doon the book wud drop on the floor, an' there he wud leave it lyin'; then he wud start up an' waalk aboot again, then sudden like stay dead still i' the middle o' the room as tho' he'd faallen intiv a sort of dwam, but stannin' up aal the while like a statty, an' at the finish he started taalkin' tiv hissel—such strange-like taalk too, as wes quite uncanny.

"At one time it wes that he wes a puir, weak, hirplin' creature, no bettor than weeds an' sic-like uselessness; at anither he said 'at it wes sair, sair on him—he hevin' done his vary utmost, an' yet accomplish't nowt; an', lad, the tone o't wes fearfu' sad, right frae the heart ov him," and here the firm curve of the narrator's mouth trembling into softness, he turned towards the window for a moment.

Before I could say anything—with a quick impatient shake of his head he had turned towards me again, and continued: "Ay, it wes sair wark ti hev ti stand an' listen, an' be able ti do nowt;

it wes jist like the time when the wife an' I lost wor first born bairn—for then the poor wife lay tossin' an' turnin', an' turnin' an' tossin' the neet through, noo grettin' tiv hersel, noo spreadin' her arms aboot searchfully, then moanin' "Gaen, gaen," an' whiles, "deid, deid." I cud do nowt i' the way o' comfort nowther time, but had just to bide quiet, sae there I stayed watchin' him, an' watchin' him, for I feared he might do hissel a mischief at the finish. Weel, at the last he sits hissel doon a bit quieter like, an' when he gets up again he lights a candle, an' heavy-footed gans ti his writin' desk an' sits hissel doon quiet like. But I hev a grave doot," said the Heckler, with a shake of his head, "that anither evenin' ov it alone will finish him off aaltegithor."

I stood reflecting. Some lines of Browning were haunting me. I could not put memory's finger upon the passage for a moment or two; then I recollected, and stepping to the bookshelf took down the volume which curiously enough opened to my hand at the very passage.

"The trial test
Appointed to all flesh at some one stage
Of soul's achievement—when the strong man doubts
His strength, the good man whether goodness be,
The artist in the dark seeks, fails to find
Vocation, and the Saint forsakes his shrine."

"Come then," said I, putting the volume in my pocket, "we must be going," and so saying I led the way downstairs, "I wunner," said the Heckler thoughtfully as soon as we were out in the open air, "whether it wud be ov any use my givin' him one o' my aad bitch's pups noo. She's just had a gran' litter o' pups, has the aad lady, an' there's one o' them that for size an' quality is a proper marvel,—just parfection, nae mair, an' nae less. Mevvies it wud divert him a bit ti hev the pup ti play wi', an' work on wi', an' distract him frae thinkin' ower much ov hissel. Wey, it'll mevvies turn oot gud enough ti win the Waterloo Cup in anither three years. What does thoo think?" he enquired of me tentatively.

Even in that moment of anxiety I found it difficult to control a smile, as I replied: "I'm afraid it wouldn't be of much avail just at the

present time." "Mevvies no," he replied slowly, "I divvn't believe he's ower much ta'en up wi' dogs nowther, for I divvn't think he's ivvor got so much as a fox terrier pup aboot the place, an' yet it's a pity too, for I'll lay odds there's not anither pup i' the whole ov England that can marrow that yen o' mine."

"By the way," I said as we walked slowly onward, "what's happening to that poor woman? Is she still going to stay on at the Rectory?" "Ay, it would seem sae," replied my companion, "for my missus was up last night hevin' her tea wi' the hooskeeper—she's tarr'ble thick wiv her, ye ken, an' wes axin' about the furrinor woman, an' the bairn, an' all, an' it appears she'll not be gannin' for a bit. It seems frae what she's let oot when delirious, an' what she's said ti' the hooskeeper, that she's searchin' for her man, an' she believes he's somewhere about here i' the North. His name's Edward Fairchild, seemingly, an' he's a schoolmaster, or Methody, or such-like, but there's no one about here that hes a name like that as I ken ov."

"Edward Fairchild?" I echoed, "Edward Fairchild, why I know that name somehow. A schoolmaster? Methody? why, yes, stay a minute, no,"—for my brain was not yet done with wonderment—"yes, yes, it must be." For all at once, and in a glare of light as it were, memory waved before my eyes the open fly-leaf of that book about 'Co-operation' which the Methody had lent me. The whole scene, totally obscured in my mind for the time, was now lit with light as though on a theatre's stage, and I even remembered the exact words which had passed between us.

"I hope," I had said, "that you have written your name in it, for a book collector is notoriously careless of another's rights, and the absence of your name might eventually prevail over a bad memory."

"Oh, yes," he replied carelessly, "my name's in all my books." I had my finger upon the fly-leaf at the moment, and I looked upon the page, "Edward Fairchild," was all I saw in the way of an inscription. I mentioned the matter, and he,

slightly confused, had quickly answered, "Oh, that was my name formerly, but I changed it to Pearson, my mother's name, for family reasons."

"Mun be what?" enquired the Heckler gazing at me half compassionately, as I stood still in the endeavour to piece the puzzle together in my mind. Carried away by the strange coincidence of name and profession, I momentarily forgot all caution, and jumping to an immediate conclusion, replied, "Why, the same as our Methody himself! But look here," I added, peremptorily checking exultation's flight, "not a word of this at present. I may be mistaken after all. Several points must be cleared up first, and I think the best plan will be for me to see the housekeeper, and persuade her to let me have an interview with the poor woman herself. So I'll just leave you here for the present," I continued abruptly, as I opened the Rectory gate, "and I hope it may be good news I'll have to report when I return." So saying I turned and walked hastily up to the back door, leaving the Heckler scratching his head and

muttering to himself: "By! but this beats me oot an' oot. Wow! but she's a puzzlor."

Having knocked at the back door I was admitted by the housekeeper, who shook her head woefully as I enquired after the Rector's health. "He's just a picter of what he shudn't ought to look like," she replied sadly, as she fumbled for the corner of her apron, her lip dipping tearfully. "Sakes alive, but I wish he'd never come to these cruel, outlandish parts o' the world!" "Look here," I said suddenly, for I felt there was no use in beating about the bush, "I have an idea I can be of some use to your master, but first of all I must see the young woman upstairs for five minutes."

"You'll not be for doing her any harm?" she said dubiously, eyeing me suspiciously over the corner of her apron, "for though she's been the cause of ill being spoke about the master, she's none so bad herself, poor thing, and the baby's a blue-eyed jool, that he is." "No, I certainly intend her no harm," I replied, "in fact, I think I may

possibly be of help to her, but in the first instance, I am hopeful of being of some real use to Mr. Pulleyne." "Well," said she slowly, "Ill go and tell her a gentleman would like to speak with her, and if she's agreeable you can go upstairs, for she's up and about, and putting on flesh every day now. But what is it you will have got to say to her?" queried the housekeeper, starting to go, but halting again as she remembered her curiosity. "That's too long a story now," I answered, "and Time's precious."

After a few minutes I was admitted to the room upstairs, and found a pale-faced, wistful-looking woman, who was evidently awaiting my arrival with some nervousness. After apologising for my intrusion, I plunged boldly into the object of my visit, and this was briefly what I elicited.

After sundry questions asked and answered, it became clear that Mr. Pearson was really the man she was in search of. I learnt, somewhat to my surprise, for I had scarcely believed that part of Mr. Pulleyne's information, that she had been

actually married to him, shortly after his expulsion from Oxford, at a registrar's office, but that he had always regarded her as a clog upon himself, as having in effect, spoilt his career, and had kept the marriage as secret as possible.

Finally, they had had words, and the quarrel had terminated in his suddenly deserting her.

She thought she had been querulous perhaps, for after her boy had been born she had never regained her strength, but it was cruel to leave her as he did. Money she had from time to time received anonymously through letters directed to her mother's house at Oxford, whither she had returned after his desertion of her.

Her mother, however, had not been kind, had constantly urged her to set out after her runaway husband, and finally, when the beginnings of another life stirred within her, she had followed up what clues she could obtain, set out upon her travels, and was stricken down just as her last money had run out.

She knew that her husband had thought of

becoming a minister in the Methodist connection, if it was possible, but was not aware whether he had succeeded. All she had gleaned in the way of information was that he was living somewhere in the remote north-east of Northumberland, either teaching or engaged in some ministerial work or other. This was all so circumstantial that there could no longer be any doubt, I thought, as she concluded her story, and, wiping the tears from her sad, care-worn eyes, asked me if I could give her any news of her husband, and "oh, did I think he would be glad to see her, and would he be kind to her again?"

I passed hastily over her interrogatory, for I feared I could scarcely answer in the affirmative, but I could safely assure her that I thought I knew where her husband was to be found, and that I would do my best to bring him to her, though first I must have some talk with the Rector on the subject.

Therewith I slipped away, and descended to the library below, where I found Mr.

Pulleyne seated at his desk, apparently employed in writing.

As I approached him I saw that the paper in front of him was quite blank, and that his complexion, save for a sallow tint, might well have matched it in colour, but with the joy of my discovery hot within me I recked little of that now, and I barely restrained myself in time from giving him a hearty smack on the back.

"Look here," I cried impetuously, after our first greetings were over, "I've made a discovery. That poor girl upstairs whom you have been so good to, is none other than the young Oxford woman on whose account Mr. Pearson was sent down, as you told me yourself. By the way, his name is Edward Fairchild, not Pearson, though you left me to find that out for myself. It's a rare find," I cried enthusiastically, "ain't it? I never knew a man better hoist with his own petard."

"My friend," he answered slowly, as stretching out his thin hand, he turned his ringed, lacklustre eyes upon me, "I thought it must be her,

yet I did not like to press her for her story, nor indeed did I want it to be known." "Not want it known," cried I in astonishment, "and why not? After all he did marry her, so he needn't fear dismissal from his office. It will be a fine lesson for him, and can't help but teach him humility, and altogether do him a world of good." "But you forget the poor woman," he admonished me gently, "I fear he scarcely regards her with any great affection. That is the terrible result of such a sin as his, that it kills love. Now, if she becomes the innocent means of his reputation being injured, and himself hindered perhaps in his profession and career, any affection he may still possess for her will probably die down and come up again as hate.

"On the other hand, if we wait till she has grown quite strong and has regained her looks, then quietly and secretly bring them together to a conference, I believe all may yet be arranged and turn out for the best. She can go South again, and he quietly follow; their separation and subse-

quent reconciliation can easily be accounted for and explained away, and when they return together here, no one save yourself and myself need know anything against them."

"Oh," cried I, distressed to think that the opportunity of revenge was to be let slip thus, "but think of the good a public exposure would do him. I'm not sure that he wouldn't even think from your acting in that manner that you were somewhat afraid of him.

"Calamity's good for that type of man; it would be the making of him, just think,"—I was continuing hotly, when a sudden disturbance sounded at the window, and amidst a rattle of window blinds, a burly form was seen to thrust itself through the open sash. In another moment the Heckler stumbled headlong into the room, evidently labouring under a great excitement. "Hurroo for thoo," he cried joyously, "hurroo for Maister John, he's gotten him; he's fixed up that Methody chap properly! I've heard the whole

thing through, an' I ken aal aboot it, never fear for that."

He advanced straight towards me, as he spoke, laid his left hand encouragingly upon my shoulder and with his right searched for my hand, which, having found, he wrung pitilessly, exclaiming joyfully the while, "Ay, thoo's cotched that beggor ov a Methody fine, by gox, an' noo we'll just warm him; ay, we'll pay him for his impittance. Just thoo leave him to me, sor," he cried, turning to the Rector, whose hand, notwithstanding a little preliminary adroitness, he soon possessed himself of, and gave a hearty shake too, "nivvor fear," he said, as Mr. Pulleyne faintly endeavoured to relieve himself, and commenced to plead again on the Methody's behalf, "nivvor fear, I'll skin him for thoo."

"But, my friend," commenced the Rector, in that low appealing voice of his, "for you are my friend, as I am well aware, and I thank you for the interest you have shown on my behalf, suppose now, you yourself had done something you were

ashamed of in the past,"—"But I hevn't," retorted the Heckler, quickly, "I hevn't, I'll stand by it aal, thick and thin,—ivvor since I got marrit on the aad missus I've thought o' no one else."

"But suppose you *had* done something of which you were ashamed," insisted Mr. Pulleyne, "you must know of others, for example, who have spoilt their lives in some manner, and are you not sorry for them? would you not help them if you could? Is it not better to set a broken leg than to cut it off? to save a life rather than see it drown?"

The Heckler began to look uncomfortable, he shifted his weight to one foot, and scraped the back of his calf with the other.

"Again, consider the evil effect it might have upon others," continued the Rector. "Suppose it were known that he had behaved very badly to the girl upstairs before he made her his lawful wife, do you not think that it would have a bad effect upon his congregation? upon those who

have been used to respect him, and to regard him as an example of a godly life ? "

" Mevvies," replied the Heckler, showing signs of recovery at the prospect of an argument, " mevvies, but what then ? Wey, I'll tell thoo ; the story 'll get oot, thae sort o' things always does, an' then where will thoo be wi' yor example ov a godly life ? Wey, thoo' 'll just be done, it'll be warse nor ivvor for hevin' been kep' secret an' not let gan into the newspapers an' things, for that's what terrifies the most o' folks, an' keeps em' straight, newspapers, publicity, an' the pollis.

" No, no, let it alone ; leave him ti the Heckler ti fettle, an' I'se warn'd but I'll hammer him properly."

The Rector looked appealing at my companion, who forthwith by a folding of the arms, and a tilting of the head backward, assumed a position indicating the most truculent obstinacy.

No one spoke for some seconds, then the Rector broke the silence, as, leaning forward and

touching the Heckler gently on the arm, he made a last appeal.

"My friend, I am not strong at present, and I cannot contend with you in argument,"—here I thought I perceived the Heckler's rigidity to relax somewhat—"but I would be infinitely obliged if you would keep silence on the matter for at least twenty-four hours. In the meantime I will write Mr. Pearson a note, and will be much obliged if you will kindly leave it at his lodgings in passing.

"Weel," replied the Heckler slowly, "I divvn't mind haudin' it in for twenty-four hours, if that's aal, an' I'll leave the "billy-doo" fast enough if thoo'll sit doon an' write it straight away, for I canna bide to think o' that chep ower there thinkin' he's got the bettor o' the lot ov us, an' aal the time I have him i' the hollow o' ma hand."

"Thank you," said the Rector simply, and forthwith, dexterously escaping a second visitation of hand-shaking, sat himself down to write the note. He sealed it, and handed it quietly to the Heckler, who took it gravely, acknowledging the

receipt with a salute, then with an anxious glance at me which plainly said, "Ho-way outside, an' talk this job ower wi' me," he backed out of the room.

I did not remain long, for I could see that Mr. Pulleyne was worn out by our interview, and that rest was of supreme importance to him, and moreover I was now longing for some conversation with the Heckler, so after a few words expressive of my sympathy and admiration I said "good-night," and hastened after him. "Anyway," thought I to myself, as I walked swiftly down the drive, "the Rector must benefit from the discovery, for something must out, and whatever else results his reputation will be enhanced and the other's diminished. He'll soon pick up now; no doubt of it;—even a saint must feel relief when an enemy's malice misses fire. By jove, I've forgotten to leave the Browning! After all, perhaps, I don't know that I could have presumed—"

"Halloa!" I cried, suddenly startled from my

reflections, as in the gathering darkness I found I had almost trodden upon the Heckler, who was "squatting on his hunkers" with his back against the trunk of a felled tree, endeavouring apparently to write a note with a quarter-inch stump of lead pencil.

"Look here," said I, "how was it you knew all about the matter? I suppose you were listening at the window all the time, eh? "Ay," he replied, unabashed, diligently moistening an inefficient point of pencil. "I wes that, an' I'll tell thoo hoo it wes noo. I thought I'd watch ower the priest like a deputy while thoo wes awa, sae I've squatted mysel two or three times before now down on my hunkers below that same windie I cam' in thro' at the finish, an' there I stayed the night, right thro' yor discovery an' aal, till I had the hang o' the whole business. Yor ower young, thoo sees, for a job o' this calibry, an' I wes dootful he would torn thoo roon' his fingers just as he liked."

"Well," I retorted, "and what's he done

with you? It didn't take long to make you 'sign the pledge.'"

"Canny, lad, canny noo, bide a wee," replied the Heckler, accompanying his words with that quaint contortion of his left eye-lid that did him service for a grin, "mevvies I give in tiv him on the matter ov haudin' my tongue for fower-an-twenty hours, but I didn't say nowt aboot not writin' a "billy-doo" as weel's himsel. No fear, lad, thoo doesn't catch the Heckler wiv a bit salt on the tail; he divvn't run straight for the gate like puss* on a dark night." "What is it you're writing?" I asked curiously, peering down upon a dirty half sheet of paper evidently torn off an ancient letter of his own. "I's just preparin' ov him for the surprise like, an' sae I've just wrote down a quotation frae a tale Geordie Smith, that lang-nebbed deevil, ye ken, him that wes across in Ameriky a while back—wes tellin' tiv us the other

*Puss, a hare, always runs for a gate when startled at night in a field; being white it probably attracts her attention. "The Heckler," being an old poacher (*vide* "Hoo 'twes" in "The Mark o' the Deil") was well aware of the fact.

night aboot a sartin place oot west where the priests wes aal on 'em a bad lot. Some man or anither—an' he mun hev been a proper comic that feller—just sent the lot of 'em a "billy-doo" wi' but these words written i' th' inside, "Aal is discuvvor'd—fly!" an', by gox, the next Sunday as ivvor wes there wesn't a single priest ti be found i' the whole place, nowther High nor Low, nor tall nor short, nor Roman nor Methody, nor nowt ava i' the black coat line, an' I's warn'd but the Heckler will hev the Methody oot o' this i-dentical village before nex' Sunday the same fashion." Here handing me up the scrap of paper he winked at me once again with the slyest gravity, and began to whistle softly.

I opened the paper carefully, and therein found the following misspelt, enigmatic message, "Aal is discuvvor'd—fly! Thoo'd best gan hyem an' tak thy wife an' bairn. Signed—Anti-humbug. Hooray!—

"That'll do the trick for him, eh?" chuckled my companion, intently noting the expression of my face, while I read the "billy-doo."

"It'll make him feel uncomfortable, anyway," I replied, smiling, as I handed him back his paper. "Ho-way then," cried he, as he commenced to stride along the drive, "an' we'll drop these two valentines on him as we pass by his hoos, an' if these divvn't shift him, wey, eithor I's not the Heckler, or there's suthin wrang somewhere or anuther."

"By the way," I said, "I thought Mr. Pulleyne was looking a trifle more cheerful, in spite of his tiring interview with ourselves, when we left him to-night, and much better surely than when you saw him last night to judge from your description."

"Ay, he's picked up hissel wunnerfu'," assented my companion, "well-plucked folks is just the same as well-plucked dogs, yence past the crissis, they're aal right, an' put on flesh wunnerful. You an' me noo, we wes a sort ov a tonic tiv him the night, but I b'lieve that if we hedn't dropped in on him sudden-like, an' persisted on the right thing bein' done—wey, I axually b'lieve

he'd hev left the Methody ti gan on as before, an' tread on him the same's ivvor. By! what a religion the priest's got, hesn't he noo? He's like the martyr chap i' the colored glass window i' the chorch wiv a sort ov a yallow bonnet on his heid an' the bonniest o' smiles on's face."

"Yes," I replied, "he's a saint."

My companion left the two notes at the Methody's lodging with the most impressive injunctions to the servant girl that she should put them into Mr. Pearson's hands at once.

"If you do shift the Methody, by the way," I said, as we walked on, "you win your bet after all."

The Heckler stood stock still for a moment, then, "Sink me," he cried vociferously, "but sae I do! Hooray! Gie us yor hand," he demanded swiftly, and, seizing it forthwith, conveyed his thanks in his usual unmistakable manner.

"But look thoo here noo," he continued more calmly, "look thoo here. I didn't gan ti shift him ti win my bet, but just because it wes

right an' proper, an' the fair thing ti do by him, when he's behaved hissel sae shabbily by the priest that's worth a baker's dozen ov us aal rolled inti one. Thoo'll bear witness ti that noo, if the priest hear tell owt about it? he enquired anxiously.

"Yes," replied I, "I can certainly do that," and therewith I said "good-night," and went straight to my bed, for I was tired.

I slept so long and soundly that it was past ten o'clock before I descended to my sitting-room. As I came in through the door the first thing that caught my eye was a crumpled note placed conspicuously on the top of my loaf of bread, and at once the memory of the previous night came flooding through my sluggish brain. I opened it, and read in a glance the following telegraphic form of sentence. "Good morning, Sir, Hooray! I've shifted him. He's gan, wife an' bairn an' aal."

"I'm glad he's gone," I thought, as I sat down to breakfast smiling over the Heckler's tumultuous self-satisfaction, "and yet I'm sorry

for him too, in a way, for worldly success is all in all to a man of that stamp, and what he will find to do now I really can't imagine, and I fear that poor little wife of his may have to suffer for his faults."

After breakfast I went round to the Colliery Office, and was then at once occupied with business till late in the afternoon. On coming out I encountered Red Tom, and after an exchange of "good-evenings," was passing on, when a sudden thought struck me, so I turned and enquired of him, "Well, and what do you think of the disappearance of the Methody, for I suppose you know he has bolted?" "Ay, ay, aa ken that," replied he gruffly, "and aa cannot say as how aa's owermuch surprised at it. Folks hes to get their livin' as best they can, aa suppose, an' if they hevn't got any intellecks, wey, the black-coat business gies 'em bread an' butter easier than most trades, but as for the gob they sets up aboot bein' se much bettor than the rest o' the world, wey, its aal doon-right foolishness,

an', what's warse, it's lies—an' here's an instance to hand."

"Well, the priest at any rate has shown himself superior to the general run of people," I replied, "for there are not many men in the world, black-coated or otherwise, who would spare a vindictive enemy when chance has put him into their hands."

Red Tom looked at me suspiciously from under his rugged brows, then answered slowly.

"Ay, aa heard the Heckler gobbin on aboot that an' aal, but aa ken he's his money on the priest, se natterally he cracks him up, but thoo, noo, mevvies thoo kens the right way o't, an' what aa wud like ti be at is this. Did the priest ken for sartin when he took the woman intiv his hoos that she wes the Methody's wife, an' did he still stick in, an' nivvor let oot anythin' that might damage the Methody's trade? Mevvies the priest didna ken that folks were scandalizin' him outside aal the while?"

"I can truthfully say "yes" to both en-

quiries," I replied, "he knew if not at the moment he let her in, at any rate within a day or two, that she was the same woman he had seen Mr. Pearson with in Oxford, formerly his mistress—afterwards his wife, and he told me himself how much pain, nay, almost torture, he had undergone because of the false and malicious reports that were spread about concerning him."

"Then how does thoo account for it? returned my companion with a near approach to heat, determined not to be foiled in his sceptical enquiries.

"Ordinarily speaking," I said slowly, looking him full in the face, "I should, like yourself, seek for some explanation or motive in a case of such quixotic self-sacrifice as this, but as I have the privilege of knowing Mr. Pulleyne slightly, that is not necessary here, for in a word he is that rarest of men in this modern world—a Christian gentleman. Here, strange as you may think it, you have a man who actually believes, and has carried

into week-day life the tenets so many of us idly repeat on Sunday."

I turned, as I finished speaking, for I was determined not to be drawn into an argument, and left Red Tom ruminating, and even impressed I was pleased to think, by the picture I had tried to draw.

Chapter V.

LAST SCENE OF ALL.

The magnanimity of the Rector as contrasted with the unscrupulous self-seeking of the Methody was at once the general topic of conversation in the village, now that the real state of the case was known, so that it was a real pleasure to me every evening to drop in at the Rectory and congratulate Mr. Pulleyne upon some fresh token or other of the esteem in which he was increasingly held.

His church on a Sunday evening, from being nearly empty, became almost crowded, and it was very natural under the circumstances that the colour should return to his cheek and the light to his eye.

His progress, however, to physical recovery was but slow, for what he had gone through had overtaxed his strength, but he was perfectly happy, and when, shortly after the disappearance of Mr. Pearson I was offered a good appointment in the South of England, I did not feel in accepting it that there was any longer any need, so far as the Rector was concerned, of either myself or the Heckler to watch over him as we tried to do in the past.

It was hard, however, to say "Good-bye;" hard also to part with my old confidant, the Heckler, but I was resolved, as I told them both, to revisit annually the scenes of my apprenticeship in the season of my holidays.

The Heckler insisted on seeing me off at the station, and as we walked up and down the platform, waiting for the train, he beguiled the interval with confidential talk.

"Red Tom's properly stagnated at the priest's behaviour to the Methody," he began, "not that he holds wi' forgivin' a chap that's gone wrang,

for he says his motty is, punish a chap that's done the wrang thing, an' he winna do it again, an' that's the way ti cure wickedness, an' cruelty, an' the seven deadly sins an' aal. If a chap gans doon the pit wiv a lucifer in 's pocket, or carries a naked light i' the fiery parts, or ' shuts fast,' wey, gie him the sack for't, says he, straight oot, an' a skelp i' the lug foreby that. But still, he says, it wes a fine action on the priest's part, an' I b'lieve he hes got to hev a bit ov a respect for him, though its tarr'ble against his will, an' bang opposite tiv aal his principles.

"In fact, there's not a man i' the village noo," he concluded enthusiastically, "but says that the priest's a gran' fellow, an', by the way," he added in a lower tone, "I'm thinkin' I'll hev ti torn roon' an' gan ti Chorch mysel. I wins my brass on him, thoo sees, i' the first place, an' one good torn deserves anuther, says I, an' in the second I think it'll please him ti see us i' Chorch."

The porter here shouted "train," and the station was at once alive with bustling people.

There was no time for more conversation, and so with a last handshake I bade farewell to a sterling friend.

For the next few months I was kept so busily at work that the prospect of seeing the Rector again receded into the distance. I corresponded with him, however, and also occasionally with the Heckler, so that I knew matters were steadily progressing in the right direction. The one point on which I was left in doubt was the state of his health; here he was absolutely silent, but some vague words in a letter from the Heckler had given me an uneasy feeling. A warm letter from Mr. Pulleyne, however, suggesting a week-end visit, made me cast about in my mind for some means of again visiting the North: a Bank Holiday was approaching, I remembered suddenly, and at once wrote and accepted his invitation.

He was waiting for me on the platform as the train drew up, and I could not fail but notice, notwithstanding the bright expression of

his face and the untroubled eyes, that he was looking exceedingly thin and frail; his garments seemed several sizes too large for him; as the Heckler remarked to me afterwards, "it was just as if he was wearing his big brother's clothes."

We had a long talk of old times that night, as also of the future, and I once more insisted on his taking a holiday. "It's all right now," I expostulated, "you've everything in capital order, nothing could be better, and if you don't take some rest at once you'll be properly knocked up, and who'll be the better for that?"

"There were just some two or three little things he wanted to get done first," he pleaded, "and then he would think of it." I saw it was no use saying more, and with one so frail and gentle it seemed quite brutal to argue and insist, so I gave it up with a sigh, and turned the conversation.

"By the way, what about Red Tom?"

"Oh!" he cried almost eagerly in reply, a

flush of pleasure showing on his cheek, "I really believe he has lost his hostility, that is, to me personally. The Church he still regards with grave doubt and misgiving, but his tone has changed greatly, and there is much to be thankful for in that, for he has a good deal of influence with the men. We were brought together in the first place through my being placed on the Lecture Committee of the Mechanics' Institute: he threatened to resign at first, but after I had been to see him, and explained that the lectures were entirely on social and industrial subjects, he consented to serve, and now he actually comes here occasionally to borrow books."

"Capital," said I, "that is indeed a good hearing, as they say over the Border. That is the greatest triumph of all, and I know how nobly you have earned your success."

"Thank you, dear friend," replied the Rector, as he stretched across from his chair, and shook me by the hand, "*you* know, perhaps, for with-

out your encouragement perhaps I might have at one time despaired of ever succeeding at all."

"Not a bit, not a bit!" I replied, "and, come now, I must not keep up an invalid any longer," so saying I marched him straight off to bed.

The next day was a Sunday; there was to be no sermon at the morning service, but there was nevertheless a good attendance. At the evening service the Church was almost crowded, a phenomenal circumstance in so far as my own recollection went, and the people most attentive.

I almost started as he gave out the text of his sermon, for it was one of two I had once made mention of to him, and I recognized at once as improbable that it was a mere coincidence, but rather a choice made by himself in his wonderfully thoughtful manner to convey to me his appreciation of what he was pleased to consider his obligation to myself.

The sermon was indeed a model, so simple, earnest, and direct. He held the people spell-

bound; no movement broke the stillness, as his gentle, soft voice pleaded on behalf of righteousness, humility, and love, and when in conclusion he knelt to pray, from here and there I caught the sounds of quiet sobbing from the women folk, and could plainly see a soft and a faraway look upon the harsh and toil-worn features of the men around me.

Mr. Pulleyne still continuing to kneel, long after we had all risen from our knees, a vague alarm spread through the Church. We looked at each other uneasily, then at the kneeling figure in the pulpit. Finally, two of the Churchwardens rose up and went slowly to the bottom of the stairs; there one of them tapped gently on the woodwork, but still there was no response. "He's dead," cried a woman near me, and at once went into hysterical sobbing. All rose up from their seats dimly possessed with this secret fear that the women had given voice to. A panic seemed almost imminent, when the Rector was seen to make a movement: opening his eyes, he looked

about him vaguely, then half rose up, and would have fallen had not one of the Churchwardens mounted the steps nimbly, and supported him in his arms.

We carried him gently into the vestry, and, sending at once for the doctor, stood about helplessly, having done what we could to make a couch for him on which to lie. He was terribly weak, his face thin and exhausted, but shining with a wonderful light beautiful to behold, and as I looked mournfully upon him I knew he was slowly and surely gliding away beyond our vision. He held out his hand to me, and said softly, "good-bye, dear friend," then closed his eyes like a tired child, and so passed peacefully away.

On the day of the funeral the pit lay idle, and the men from far and near attended at the grave side. The faithful Heckler was a pall bearer, and I saw Red Tom himself amidst the crowd of mourners, in comparison with which the massed wreaths of white flowers, the "posies of pitmen's pinks," were but a feeble testimony of the respect

and love which the departed had so hardly won for himself by his patient persistence in well-doing.

On the simple tombstone erected to his memory by public subscription, the text of his last memorable sermon was carved by general consent, "What else is required of thee but to love mercy, and to shew justice, and to walk humbly with thy God."

"TEMPLE TOMMY'S" TALE.

"TEMPLE TOMMY'S" TALE.

It was characteristic of "Tommy," as of many other gentle and warm-hearted souls, that tales of violence, and crime, and revolting wickedness in general had a particular fascination for him. I had seen him on occasion pick up a half-frozen worm from the cinder footpath, and deposit it carefully in the dykeside so that none might tread on it, then immediately after sit himself down, and, plucking a newspaper from his pocket, proceed to read the last "triple murder and suicide," or gloat over the details of the latest Whitechapel horror, audibly ejaculating the while, "Eh, but it's fearfu'."

"Wow, but what an awsome deed's yon!" and other similar asides.

It had long been my desire to draw from him some account of the former proprietors of the great and ruined Hall which stood some little way back from the village in which he dwelt, but without avail, till, happening to come up with him one afternoon just opposite the gateway, I caught him on the spot, and after a few careless interrogatives, gradually overcame his reluctance—with what result the following tale will testify. I should perhaps add that he made me promise not to divulge his revelation. This promise I fear I can only claim to have kept after the fashion of the Jesuits of old, who regarded their obligations as being only so far binding as sundry mental reservations of time, place, and manner would permit; I further endeavour to believe that I have salved my conscience by a change in the names of the actors in the story.

"Isn't there a curious story about a will being found in some mysterious manner?" I enquired,

"I'm sure I have heard some eerie tale or other, and indeed I could believe anything anyone was pleased to tell me concerning that ancient, black, and lightning-riven ruin there amongst the trees."

"Ay," I heard "Tommy" mutter to himself by way of reply, as his eyes followed in the same direction as my own, "yor right there. Wey, if them stones could only speak they'd tell tales ti horrify anyone that calls hissel a Christian." Fascinated by the aspect of the grey and high-built Hall, the eyrie of weird tradition that reared itself like some old donjon amidst the stunted wind-wrecked trees, proudly overlooking on the one side the level spaces of the sea, and on the other wide stretches of bare countryside, I fell to dreaming of the past, of feudal splendour with its jewelled insolence and haughty disregard of human life.

"Come now," I exclaimed, as "Tommy" made a step forward as though about to continue on his way up the avenue, "you know some of the tales, and you really must tell me one. All things are fitting—the time, the man, and the listener, so let

us sit down on that fallen beech yonder whence I can still get a glimpse of the Hall as a frontispiece to your story."

"Well," replied my companion, reluctantly yielding to the pressure of my constraining arm, "if yo're set on it, dootless the most peaceable way will be ti gratify ye at once; otherwise it wud be like wor youngest bairn who nivvor leaves pullin' at her daddy till she hes her way wiv him." Sitting down on the lower part of the recumbent beech I motioned him to the smooth space beside me, but he avoided my recommendation, and sought a seat amongst the lower branches.

"No, no," he said, "ye may like ti get a keek at the Ha' noo an' agen yorsel ti be a sort o' seasonin' ti the story, but for me that's seen what I hev seen there needs no such a remindor.

"Ay, they were a fearfu' folk, the Delacamps, fearfu', wivoot any religon at aal, an' the old Lord,—him that wes the last o' them, wes aboot champion for wickedness."

"Tommy" paused here for some moments, while

he regarded me with an increased seriousness as though to discover if I were in a mood proper to the solemnity of the occasion.

"Noo, Maister John," he continued, "there's a tarr'ble plausibility aboot the doctrine o' predestination—isn't there noo? For myself I's no great upholder o' thae cruel Calvinian creeds, as they call them—but, man, there's a wonderfu' convincingness aboot it, for if ye can but accept it, it'll explain aal for ye, frae the beginnin' ti the end ov a trajiddy. Ye'll mind aboot Pharaoh i' the Bible, an' hoo his heart wes hardened till at the end he perished miserably? well if ye b'lieve i' predestination it's aal right, for then he wes a vessel chosen oot for dishonour an' an example for futor centries, an' mevvies it wud be like be made up tiv him eftor?" continued "Tommy" enquiringly. "Divvn't ye think sae, yorsel, noo, Maister John?" he pursued in the wheedling fashion of an advocate, "for suppose noo, that Pharaoh had wished ti do what wes right an' wes prevented, hoo then? winnot that count for righteousness tiv him? That,

an' him havin' made hissel useful as a sort o' bogle for the fleyin' ov aal futor generations o' men?"

"Yes," I replied, as "Tommy" waited for a reply, "I most certainly think so, any way I'm with you in heartily disliking Calvinism and all its works."

"Tommy" looked at me gratefully for a moment before taking up his tale. "Well, mevvies the same thing may hold good o' the Delacamps; mevvies wiv aal their sins an' wickedness they may hev made theirsels useful i' ways that we can scarcely comprehend."

"They're aal dead and gane noo," he continued, his parenthesis satisfactorily concluded, "just fair distinguished, aal save Mistress Grace, that is, who wes the old Lord's daughter, an' wes married on the priest.

"She's no canny, at aal, that Ha', man, no canny at aal, an' after sundown she's haunted. Man, but it's an eldreish place, yon, and I divvn't care ower much ti look at her. "Well," he continued, after a slight pause, "I'll tell ye the tale I ken the

best, for its an experience o' my own an' happened only 25 years back, tho' there's tales aboot the Delacamps that gans back right inti the depths o' oblivion,—I mean right awa' back ti the Norman conques', an' the Deluge, an' aal.

"Ye'll mind the little bit lodge at the corner o' the lang garden wall that ye passed comin' up? well, that's the lodge my feythor lived in, an' in which I wes born mysel, an' bein' sae close ti the Ha' I came ti ken the old Lord ti look at lang before he ivvor cam' ti tak' any notis ov us. Noo, tho' there's a whack o' sin, an' sufferin', an' cruelty, an' selfishness, i' the world, Maister John, I divvn't think many folks really intends their wickedness; it's often no mair nor the want o' thought that the poet Wordsworth, I think it is, writes aboot, an' not the want o' heart, but wi' the old Lord it wes different, he meant it ivvory bit, an' he wes aye vexed it wesn't a bit warse, I's warned. Wey, I' b'lieve if an angel frae Heaven hed come across his path he'd hev waved her awa', an' said, 'Had awa' hinny, had awa', thoo's oot o'

thy proper sphere, thoo's trespassin' here.' An', man, he hed the wickedest look iv his eye it's possible ti imagine whenivvor any bonny featured woman or lass passed him on the road. Wey, ye cud a'most tell at a distance what sort ov a lass the lass wes by whether she wud quicken her pace eftor she'd passed him or no. It wes a cruel look, an' a greedy look, an' sae pryin' and inquisitive that any decent woman wud blush at it, an' wish, mevvies, for a bit shawl or extry wrap as tho' she felt she'd not enough claes ti conceal her person wiv.

"That wes his look for a woman, an' what wes his look for a man?—Waur, but different, an' as fu' o' contemptuousness as an egg's fu' o' meat; at times if he wes vexed or crossed 'twes a'most as if he'd spat ye i' the face, makin' ye hev a sort o' bristly feelin' up the back, ye ken, if ye were one o' thae one-man's-as-good-as-anither radical sort o' chaps; an' if not, if ye were one o' the other sort o' ax-pardon fellows, wey, I's warned but ye felt as tho' ye hedn't an excuse for livin' same's a litter o' pups

that thae dog-men droons wivoot a scuple, mevvies savin' one oot o' the whole fam'ly.

"Well, as I wes sayin', I kenned the old Lord canny wivoot his ivvor hevin' taken any notis ov us, an' mevvies he'd nivvor hev spoken a word tiv us at aal if it hedn't been that he chanst across us as I wes kneelin' prayin' i' the wood ower yonder.

"I wud be aboot nineteen then, I b'lieve, an' hed just been bound for a hewer at the aad Mill Pit, but what wes o' mair importance still I hed just hed my call frae the Lord Jesus, an' wes fu' o' joy an' thankfu'ness at hevin' escaped frae the bondage o' sin thro' bein' converted. Well, it so happened that I wes oot helpin' my feythor who worked as a woodman on the place, one Saturday afternoon, an' I wes just restin' awhile till he shud come back wi' some nails for a fence he wes puttin' up, when sudden comes the thought inti my mind, what a gran' chanst it wes o' puttin' up a bit prayer an' thanksgivin'. It wes one o' thae gran' efternoons

i' the spring, ye ken; the west wind like the breath o' sweet flowers, the sun blithe and heartsome like a strong man aboot to run his race, an' aal things wi' their hearts fairly expandin' i' the marvellous beauty o' the season.

"I hed na been doon on my knees vary lang, nor hedn't getten'd a vary good start on my prayer, for I wes young tiv it, an' not much ov a scholar then, when there comes a great guffaw o' laughin' frae near by, an' turnin' roon', who shud I see stannin' there but the Lord?"

"The Lord?" I enquired, somewhat startled.

"Ay," he replied, "the old Lord Delacamp; naebody else cud have laughed that laugh save him, unless mevvies an evil sperrit, sae haughty an' cruel, an' dogmatic it wes."

"Dogmatic?" I echoed, my ingenuity at fault.

"Ay, dogmatic, treatin' ye like a dog, ye ken. Well, it's a tarr'ble thing ti hev ti confess ti, but I badly doot it's the truth, an' that is that I was sae flabbergasted wi' that scornfu' laugh

ov his that I scrambled up frae my knees on ti my feet as red i' the face as though I'd been doin' somethin' I was properly ashamed of."

"Yoicks!" he cries, "forrard on, forrard on! Is conscience blown so soon? or has she cast a shoe that ye should sneak awa' i' the middle o' the run like that? or mevvies that pertiklor sin ye were eftor has gone ti ground there ti bide comfortably till hounds are drawn off, when, my word for it, the young cub will at once be at his old tricks again. Why, thoo misorrabil, little, cantin', snuffling, cowardly Methody," cries he, cracking his whip (for he had one o' thae big huntin' whips wiv him) at me, an' flickin' me roon' the calf o' the leg wi' the lash, "thoo's not a bit bettor than the rest o' the tribe. I never caught a man on his knees yet—ootside o' Churches—but what he louped tiv his feet in a tarr'ble hurry, just as ye did then, wiv his cheeks flamin' an' a reg'lor Tom Fool look on his face, an' as 'shamed ov hissel as it's possible tiv imagine. But divvn't thoo flatter thysel!

There's a special place prepared for thoo doon below, an extry hot furnace for parsons, methodies, an' priests an' aal, an' 'twill be the rarest comfort I'll get down there, ti help turn a fat priest on a gridiron, or mevvies hook a young Methody like yorsel on tiv a spit."

"I wesn't ashamed ov offerin' up my bit prayer just enoo," I commences, hevin' hed time to collect mysel a bit, when he interrupts me.

"Oh, ho, and sae ye say! but what meant that colour in your cheeks, an' the guilty start ye gave?"

"Ye cam' upon us sudden like, an' I hev a narvous temperament," says I.

"Capital, capital," he shouts, an' roars wi' laughin' as he slaps his thigh, "a narvous temperament," he mimics me. "Why, it beats play-actin' the glib way these Methodies oots wi' their explanations, an' excuses, an' all! They should be caught young an' put inti the diplomatic sarvice," says he, "either that or else turned inti clowns an' such like.

"Will ye come up ti the Hall ti live, an' be my jester?" he axes me at the finish.

"No," I says, "I wunnot, not for no amount o' brass."

"An' why not?" says he, "are ye afraid o' my Lady?"

"Not mair ov her than o' the rest o' ye," I replied, "but I doot there wudn't be a blessin' on it; not that I wud condemn ye hastily, nor naebody else for that matter, for we are told i' the Scriptors: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' An' again, I dinna ken hoo great an' strong yor temptations may be. Mevvies a lord's temptations are far ower mair powerfu' than a pitman's, an' dootless the womenfolk are kind o' fascinated bi ye—aal which must make it difficult for ye ti keep along on the narrer path."

"But what's the use o' temptations," says he, "if ye resist them? why, they wudn't exist at aal, an' the narrer path wud vanish, and Providence and the Methodies wud flee awa' like ghaists. No, no," he continued in his mocking way, battling

me down with those bold eyes of his, "'twould be flyin' i' the face ov Heaven not ti sin wi' frequency, an'," says he, "thoo acknowledges the same thoosel, for when thoo wes on thy knees just noo thoo must hev been repentin' o' some sly trick or other, I'll be bound. Mevvies the lasses has a fascination for thoo, or mevvies wiv a person like yors thoo hes a fascination for the lasses;" and here he threw his eyes ower me frae head ti feet wiv a sort o' bitin' sneer i' them, as he compared me wiv hissel dootless, an' notissed that I hed a bit ov a club foot.

"For shame," says I, "thoo an' I alike are fashioned oot o' the same clay by the A'mighty who delights not, as ye may read i' the Bible, i' the legs ov any man. Wey, man," says I, "or Lord, or Marquee, or whativvor it is ye caall yorsel, I'se fair ashamed o' ye."

He looked savage for a moment, an' ups wiv his whip, then he laughs oot agen, an' chucks me a sovereign, an' says, "There's somethin' for ye, or for the collection nex' Sunday, for I owe you a

hearty laugh," says he, an' awa' he swaggers doon the path slappin' his leg wiv his huntin' stick as he gans.

"Well, ever after that he wes sort o' half-friendly wiv us; at any rate he took notis ov us as he passed noo an' agen, throwin' a bit chaff at us aboot prayin, an' narvous constitootions, an' such like.

But it wesn't sae very long after all this that the old lord got taken wi' the gout tarr'ble bad, and hed to be wheeled aboot in a chair on castors. I think things wes aaltegether gannin' wrang on him at that time, anyways he aged fearfully fast latterly.

The only bairn he had wes a girl—the only bairn leastways that wes born in wedlock, an' that was a tarr'ble disappointment tiv him, for he hated his heir an' nevvy like poison, mevvies because he would likely be a sort o' memento tiv him that he would hev ti die sometime. Then his missus agen, my Lady that wes, she wes just as bad at carryin' on wiv the men as my Lord wi' the women folk

formerly, an' dootless it wes tarr'ble aggravatin' for him sittin' there wiv his feet in a poke ti see such goin's on an' yet be unable ti hev a set-to hissel.

"There's two places, by the way, i' the grounds, named after the carry-ons o' the Lord an' my Lady—the first is a bit o' risin' ground wiv a pagodie, or dolls-hoos on the top where he met wiv his lights-o-love, an' Nannies, an' aal, an' the other is a walk twixt two high hedges that they call 'My Lady's Bower.'

"Well, to crown aal the old Lord's misfortunes what should his daughter do but take up sweetheartin' wi' the Priest i' the village, a curate just fresh come frae Oxford wiv no brass at aal. The upshot ov it aal wes, as indeed ye may easily imagine, that the old Lord, not long after, wes carried off in an apoplexie, tarr'ble sudden an' unexpected like.

"It was always supposed that the old Lord wud hev cut Mistress Grace off wiv a penny piece, if she insisted on marryin' wi' the priest, an' it

wes a bit o' a surprise ti larn when it came ti the will readin', that she wes ti hev £40,000 for her dowry, an' nowt said aboot whom she wes ti marry wi'. None of us gave the old Lord any credit for it though, for aal believed tiv a man that 'twes only the suddenness ov his death takin' him unexpected like that prevented him hevin' hed a new will made oot iv her disfavour.

"It wesn't vary long before she got hersel married, an' awa' the pair o' them went ti live i' south country, for the priest's health wes delicate. My Lady, too, she went off inti furrin' parts wiv a Frenchy Count—some said she wes married, an' some no, an' mevvies she'd care little aboot it hersel, whilst the heir and nevvy, he just shuts the place up, sayin' that it wes a "damned haunted dungeon," says he, an' it wes far ower big ti hire oot tiv anybody else ti live in. Well, it happened some little time after aal these changes had taken place that I wes oot late one night i' the back end ov October. I'd been married recently, an' hed been ti fetch some physic frae the doctor's for my missus.

"I just scurried past the Ha' on the way back, for I wes always flayed ov her after dark on account o' the tales that were told, an' just as I'd got by, an' wes inti the wood on the far side, I got a glimpse o' somethin' that made my heart gie a loup like a rabbit shot wiv a gun.

"Ah, the gliff I'd getten'd wes fearfu'. I just crooched doon on my hunkers behind a bit privet hedge tremblin' aal ower, for whom had I seen slippin' silently past on t'other side but the old Lord, ay, an anither wiv him.

"It wes one o' them high, windy, October nights, an' the moonlight shinin' oot an' in betwixt the gusts, an' I'd gettened a fair view on the pair o' them i' the midst o' the streamin' light. I recognised the old Lord iv a snap,—his face thinner an' paler than it hed been i' life, an' tarr'ble drawn an' haggard lookin', as tho' he cud never hev gettened a bit o' sleep, an' had suffered fearfu' pangs in his mind an' mem'ry; ay, it wes him, no doot, an' that wes bad enough, but the other's face wes far warse e'en than his. He wes

holdin' up a bit coat or shawl, as a man might who didn't want ti be recognised, but ower the top ov it I caught a look at his face, and it wes just a fair shock ti behold . . . . Well," he continued after a pause, with curt impressiveness, "it was just *him*."

"The dev—," I began, but "Tommy," with a swift and fearful glance around, caught me up on the instant. "Ay, ay, just him, just livin' wickedness framed in a lightning flash, as one might say, the mere vision o't cuttin' the narves like a knife, searin' the vary heart's blood. Eh, but that night's seein' has given us grey hairs before wor time. For just think, Maister John, what a face like yon mun mean! Just pictor it ti yorsel. It canna love owt, not e'en for a second o' time. I doot whether it can e'en love itsel. Ti gan on livin', an' livin', an' hatin' everything i' the whole world frae wide Heaven above, doon ti deepest Hell below—isn't it a fearfu' thought?" and "Tommy" sat silent for a space wrestling with the image his own words had evoked.

"I just had ti catch my breath back an' try ti pray for deliverance, an' then I crawled till I win ti the wood's edge, an' after that, well, no greyhound ever pupped cud hev bested us that night.

"I wes mevvies aboot half way up the avenue when a fearfu' thing happened. There came an awfu' jag o' lightnin' that seemed ti set fire iv an instant o' time ti the whole earth, an' right i' the midst o' that white furnace o' fire I saw the great tower o' the Hall tremble an' totter like a drunken man, then fall iv it's full length ti the ground. The Heavens rang roond an' roond wi' the thunder clap that followed, as tho' a thoosand doors ov a great prison hoos had been clanged open, an' a thick sulphurous smoke came rollin' like as when ye fire a shot doon the pit, aal along the earth, chokin' the empty space 'mongst the trees. This is the last trump, an' the day o' doom, I thinks, an' casts mysel doon wi my hands ower my eyes, fearfu' o' bein' blinded by the glory ti be revealed.

"Hoo lang I lay there waitin' I divvn't ken,

nor hoo lang I might hev bided nowther, hedn't the thought o' my missus lyin' aal alone come ower me, for she wad be wantin' us to join hand in hand wiv her ti gan before the Judgment Seat ti mak' wor answers for wor sins.

"Well, when I got home I fund she wesn't nigh sae terrified as mysel, an' I wes tarr'ble glad o' that, for iv her delicate position at that time, a gliff like that I'd gettened might hev hed the warst o' consequences.

"I cud scarce get a wink o' sleep the night thro', for I wes always expectin' to hear the sound o' the trumpets every minute, and when the morn came at the finish I felt that shabby an' shaken that there wes no wark for us that day. After hevin' hed wor breakfasts I felt a bit refreshed like, an' a tarr'ble curiosity came ower us ti gan doon ti the Hall, an' see the ruin the thunder-bolt hed made.

"When I got there the place wes in a tarr'ble confusion, tho' there wes nobody else aboot that I cud see—it not bein' generally known then that

she hed been struck—the tower hevin' crashed right doon thro' the roof o' the library and drorin' rooms, an' busted the great front door right open ti the air. It wes mair like a pit heap than anything else i' the warld, the great door-steps aal covered ower wi' broken stanes, an' fragments o' chimbleys, an' glass—just like a midden, an' when I got inside it wesn't much better there. As I stood there gazin' aboot disconsolate like, the old hoos-keeper comes alang. I kenned her clivvor, for her grand-daddy wes married on Jenny Straughan, that wes my wife's feythor's step-daughter biv his forst wife, ye ken, an' comin' up wi' me she says quite ordinary-like, 'Ay, it's aal iv a tarr'ble mess, and I doot the young Lord 'll do nowt ti put it right, for he cares nowt aboot the place at aal—just a spendthrift for hissel an' a skinflint for others—an' I'm thinkin' I'll just be for flittin' mysel eftor Mistress Grace, that wes the only one o' the fam'ly I cared for. By the ways,' says she, tuggin' at something in her pocket, 'one o' the first things I sees when I

comes upon the desolation by the light o' day was just this,' and here she holds up a dockymint iv her hands, 'an' I b'lieve it'll be a will o' the old Lord's. I mind his makin' me sign my name tiv a parchment of this sort; hoo an' when I canna mind exactly. I doot I must hev been in a kind o' dwam at the time, but anyways it's my hand an' my mark at the end o't, for tho' I'se a tarr'ble bad scholar I can read my hand an' mark, an' that's them' she says, as she opens the paper and shows me a great sprawlin' 'Barbara Haydox —her mark.'

"Wow," says I, "but what a strange thing is this, findin' a will i' that fashion, wey, its no canny at aal! I wunner what i' the warld it can aal be aboot," I says, "nae good I'll be bound.

"'I ken nowt aboot that,' says she, 'but as long as I bide here I've my dooty ti perform, an' what I wants thoo ti do is to take it ti the old Lord's lawyers tellin' em exactly hoo I found it an aal.'

"Well, it wesn't a job I wes keen aboot, but she carries on sae hersel, an' what wiv her bein' a

very old body an' nigh ti bed-ridden, an' a bit o' a relation of my own as well, I says I will at the finish.

"When I got ti the lawyer's office i' the toon I axes ti see the gaffer i' private an' very partiklor, an' I tell't him the whole thing right oot, an' what I'd seen an' aal. When I gets finished he looks at me frae unner his heavy eyelids, an' he says, 'Mevvies thoo is a credulous sort ov a man?' says he. 'No,' I says, 'I's not, I's a true believor oot an' oot.' He gies a bit smile at this, an' then he says, 'Well, its a curious tale, an' a still mair curious dockyment,' says he, 'but 'tis informal, as it turns out, otherwise Mistress Grace, as ye call her, wud hev been robbed ov aal she hes, an' the Asylum for Idiots wud hev ta'en her £40,000. An' noo, look thoo here, there's somethings best not ta'alked aboot,' says he, 'an' this is one o' them. Here's a sovereign,' he says, as he slides her into my hand,' for your trouble and expenses, and anither for the hoos-keeper, an' think o' this,' he adds, as he shows me oot, keepin' the docky-

ment iv his hands, 'as ye gan home, that a wise man will put mair value on a good sovereign than on a bad vision.'

"Dear me, noo!" "Tommy" broke off suddenly with a frightened ejaculation, "and what's that?" as an owl hooted shrilly above us in the gathering dusk. "Howay," he said, before I had even time to reply, "howay," it's no a canny place this eftor dark, Maister John, at aal. He's aye oot eftor dark searchin' for that will, sae, howay!" and herewith he clapped his arm through mine, and led me away down the avenue at double quick time.

NOTE.—In order to avoid all misconception it may be well to state that in the narrator of the above and following tale, a type rather than an individual has been depicted, and it is only in "The Flight of the Lodger," that the author has attempted to draw a likeness of the late Mr. Gleghorn, of Seaton Delaval.

A CHAMPION CONVERSION.

A CHAMPION CONVERSION.

"YES," replied "Tommy," in answer to a query, "Black Geordie wes a reg'lar charc'ter aboot here some twenty years syne, a reg'lar charc'ter, an' no mistake, for he wes wivoot doot the biggest black-ayard ov his time, an' efter that the powerfullest man at prayin' the whole countryside. Add ti that again, that he wes the heaviest eater an' drinker ivvor kenn'd i' these parts, while for bairn-gettin' him an' his missus had triplets at one time an' twins at the other, for there was nothin' narrer nor small-minded aboot him, I's warn'd ye. Sae just add aal these pints tegither i' yor mind, an'

ye'll hev a fine picture ov a man. I doot that sort o' breed's just extinct, Maister John, like some o' those big creatures I've heard tell of i' books I've read. Wow, but he wes a reg'lor Trojan !

"He wes a proper Samson at hewin' coals forbye, an' such wes his repute far an' near, that the viewer at the High Colliery sends for him, an' he says tiv him, 'If thoo'll work for us,' says he, 'wey, I'll gie thoo a sov'rin a day wage an' as much butcher's meat as thoo can eat!' Sae Geordie says, 'Gie me my arles* an' I'll hew for thoo on thae terms.'

"Well, he hedn't been hewin' above a fortnight when wivoot any warnin' he gets his notis, and when he gans up ti the office ti ask 'What for?' the manager tells him right oot that he wes properly ruinin' him i' butcher's bills. 'Wey,

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* Arles, binding money. "Mr. Pigg's demand of Mr. Jorrocks."
"Your wot?" enquired Mr. Jorrocks.
"My arles, we always get arles i' wor country."
"Wot all your wittles at once?"
"No, man,—Sir, aw mean,—summat to bind bargain like."

thoo must eat a whole ox each week,' says he, 'not countin' a stray sheep or so thrown in here an' there.'*

"'Mevvies I do,' says Geordie, 'but if I hew eight tons o' coals for thoo a day I's well worth it!' says he. He sartinly hed a champion appetite," continued "Tommy," "an' wes always ready for his meat, as his wife kenned nicely. There wes once as he lay in his bed, gettin' his sleep efter comin' in frae the fore shift, a clivvor leg o' mutton roastin' i' front ov his fire, an' his missus wes standin' beside it bastin' it, an' when she thinks it's gettin' aboot rightly cooked, she just cuts off a wee piece biv the nuckle, as the wife often will, ye ken, to try an' see if it wes aal right. Well, Geordie wesn't asleep efter aal, an' the sight ov her tastin' his meat wes mair nor he cud stand, sae there an' then he flees oot o' bed iv his linin's, dashes his missus aside, seizes the mutton biv the bone end, and loups back into his bed,

*This must have been a special arrangement, for hewers are not paid by the day, but by the amount of "tubs" hewn each fortnight

shoutin' ti the wife, 'Thoo great slovenly b——, thoo, ti gan an' spoil maa meat that fashion;' an' he sets hissel ti wark on it wiv his teeth just as he lay there iv his bed, shiftin' it roon' iv his hands as a dog does a bone, till he'd clean finished it aaltegithor.

"Well, it wes a long time before he got convarted, for it wes a tarr'ble while before he wud listen ti the call frae the Lord, but the way it come aboot at the finish wes this.

"The marrow he hed ti wark wi' for many years wes just such anither as hissel, but on a much smaller scale, ye ken—a swearin', gamblin' hardworkin' beer-barrel sort o' chap, an' mevvies wud hev kep on his old courses till he died hedn't a tarr'ble accident happen'd him i' the pit. He wes the last ti come up ti bank, an' wes aal biv' himsel i' the cage when, just as she wes close up by, the rope breaks, an' doon, right doon the shaft thunners the cage wiv' him in it.

"Well, nobody that disn't wilfully shut his eyes ti plain fact can deny that his bein' saved,

as he wes, mun hev been the direct interposition of Providence, for the shaft wes 40 fathom deep, if she wes an inch, an' yet there he wes not more than stunned, half a dozen ribs broken, an' his hands nigh cut in half.

"The only way ti account for his not bein' dashed aaltegithor i' pieces is, under Providence, that the shaft's not parfectly straight, hevin' a bit turn about 30 yards frae the bottom, sae that the shock o' the fall wes divided up a bit, an' didn't come on him aal at once.

"Well, efter he'd finished wi' the doctorin' he wes a changed man; he said himsel' twarn't likely he shud hev hed that tarr'ble fall, wivoot bein' massac'ed biv it, aal for nowt.

"Sae he turns hissel roon' an' makes a new start as a Christian man, an' nowt will satisfy him but he must get his marrow, 'Black Geordie,' convarted also, for he says the judgment ov his fall wes meant for both o' them, bein' marrows, but Geordie says no, he'd getten'd no fall, an' as for judgment it wes the ropeman who wanted that,

for not hevin' tested it properly that day,—well, they hammered away at each other, but Geordie says, 'Smash man, but thoo's a fool, that fall's just addled what little brains thoo ever hed. 'When I's done I's done, sae hev your whack whilst ye can,' he says. 'Ay, thoo may think say noo,' said his marrow, 'but wait till thoo's across Jordan, an' then thoo'll see.'

"'Get on wi' yer nonsense,' says Geordie, quite vext wi' the other; 'thoo's no better than a priest noo wi' yor judgment an' Jordans, an' aal.' 'Well,' says the other solemnly, 'I doot I's not lang for this warld, for I's had my notis the other night, but what I say is this, supposin' I come back frae the other warld ti warn thoo o' the wrath to come, winno thoo b'lieve it?'

"'No,' Geordie replied vary contemptuous, 'thoo canna gliff me that way.' 'But what wud thoo do if thoo thought thoo saw us come back frae the other warld?' 'Wey, I'd just tak a pill, an' louse my hide,' says his marrow, 'or mevvies drop the beer for a night. But I warn

thoo,' he continues, gettin' warm again, 'that if thoo comes foolin' aboot my hoos efter this, dead or alive, I'll clap the poker thro' yor guts,' says he, an' wi' that he marches awa, an' takes up wiv anither marrow, an' nivvor speaks ti the other again i' this life. Well, we notised, aal ov us, that Geordie turned kind o' queer iv his actions an' manners not vary lang efter his former marrow died, for he grew quite quiet like for him aal ov a suddint, an' scarce seemed aware ov it if folks spoke tiv him. Then at anither time mevvies he'd spang oot intiv a fury for nowt; if thoo were to say 'Yes,' in answer ti a question frae him he'd glare at thoo as though he'd been fair insulted upon; an' again if thoo wished to please him, an' said 'No,' he'd call thoo aal the colours o' the rainbow right oot. It wes always said, Maister John, that he wes a proper champion at 'callin'' anyone who might vex him any, an' at cursin' an' sweerin' iv a general way, for he wes always first class at anythin' he took up wi', an' mevvies as he wes such a strong sort o' calibre ov a man it came

natural tiv him, an' wesn't sae bad in him as it wud be wi' the likes o' you an' me.

"It seems he thought he wes bein' haunted by sperrits, ye see, an' he didn't like it, not bein' the sort o' chap who wud stand bein' interfered wiv iv any way, nor bein' spied upon, nor drove at aal, an' at nights t'wes said he carried on fearfu', smashin' aal the lookin' glasses an' picture frames wiv a poker, or anything at aal shiny that cud reflect at aal. He took ti the beer warse than ivvor to droon his cares an' his fancies, but it seemed it only made things warse, an' at the finish he thinks he'll try the chapel, an' see if he cud exorcise the sperrits, or his marrow's ghaist, or whativvor it was, that wes hauntin' him. His missus just thought he was clean bewitched, for she'd seen nowt hersel, an' bein' a chapel goer mevvies wesn't sae flay'd as her man, who hed always ridiculoused religion aal his life previous.

"Well, he gans ti the Chapel then wiv his missus one Sunday mornin', an' sits under a reg'lor orator ov a man, one o' thae sort who hae

the gift, ye ken, Maister John, noo thunnerin' at ye till ye get a shiver aal doon the back, noo whisperin' ye softly an' parsuavisly till the tears are runnun' doon yor cheeks wivoot yer knawin' owt aboot it.

"An' Geordie, he sits there like a child, for here wes a man, as he said himsel efterwards, who wes tellin' him aal things that he hed ivvor done in his life, an' wiv a parfect unnerstandin' as ti why he'd done them as well.

"There he stay'd, an' wadn't budge efter the Sarvice wes over, but lies doon on the floor groanin' an' grovellin' for six hours, when, as he said, he seed a sort o' glorious vision, an' the Lord comes tiv him, an' touches him on the shoulder, an' says tiv him, "*Hinny, thoo's saved.*"

"Well," continued "Tommy" slowly, efter a pause, "there's no doot that it wes a real proper convarsion at the time, whativvor backslidings might hev chanced efterwards, an' nobody ivvor bore his testimony o' the change iv hissel mair powerfully than Geordie for some six months

efter. He wes just fu' o' fire an' eloquence, red hot wiv earnestness, an' many's the talk they hev ov him at that period ov his life. Wey, it chanced one day that there wes one o' thae Jew pedlar cheps comin' doon the Raa* wiv a pack o' trinkets, an' gaudy pictures, an' such like things that tempt the wives, ye ken, when Geordie wes stannin' iv his doorway. Soon as ivvor he claps eyes on him, he gies a sort o' start, then flees inside his hoos, an' claps ti the door, sayin' tiv his missus, "Here, lass, here's one o' thae Jew fellers comin' doon the Raa who kill'd the Lord Jesus. I's warn'd!" he says, "but I'll punish him properly if he shoves his finger inside o' wor door steek!" It wes one o' those old fashioned sort, "Tommy" explained, "that ye hed ti lift up by puttin' yor finger thro' a hole an' pushin' up the catch frae the ootside.

"Well, doon gans Geordie on his knees waitin' for the pedlar ti gie his hoos a try.

"Aal in good time he comes along suspectin' nowt, gies a bit tap on the door, and claps his

*Row.

finger through the hole. Wow, but what a surprise he hed getten'd!

"There he wes, held fast biv he knew not what, an' tarr'ble pained mairover, for Geordie hed grand teeth, an' hed clagged them right ti the bone.

"Smash! but the yell the pedlar let wes just tremendjus! Then, wiv a desperate pull, he drags his finger oot o' the trap, an' flees awa aff doon the village, wivoot ivvor lookin' behind him, for aal the warld like a dog wiv a kettle at the hinder end ov him.

"Shortly efter that there wes a great Revivalist meetin' held aboot here, an' Geordie bein' greatly taken up wiv it, didn't require much persuasion ti stand up on a platform i' the open air amongst them aal, an' gie an account ov hissel an' his experiences.

Up he gets, then, on ti the platform, dressed oot just as if he wes gannin' doon the pit for a shift, iv his hoggers an' aal, wiv his davy iv his hand, an' his pick unner his arm, an' holds forth

aboot his past life an' aal the evil things ivvor he'd done iv it, not lettin' hissel aff easy, but heapin' up his wickedness an' callin' hissel ivvorythin', an' in between whiles the Hallelujah lasses kep' bangin' on their tambourines, an' cryin' oot, "The Lord be praised," "Praise the Lord for His mercy!" for they aal felt it wes a grand triumph ti hev getten'd hold o' such an evil liver as Geordie hed been up to that time.

"He kept on bravely for a bit, did Geordie, efter that, hammerin' aal his old friends an' marrows ti come ti Chapel, an' "gie it a try," an' some came an' tried it, ay, an' went reg'lar efterwards.

"I divvn't mysel aaltegithor fancy," continued "Tommy" meditatively, after a moment or two of inward reflection, "thae's sort of steam-organ convarsions, as one may say,—they're ower sudden an' forced like, they divvn't last lang, an' in Geordie's case, as I said before, he didn't keep on as he'd begun mair nor six months.

"Efter that he took ti "lyin' in" ov a Sunday

mornin', an' for the evenin' sarvice, when he wes searched for, he cudn't be found, hevin' usuallies left a message wiv his missus that he wes awa' ti gie a hand at some field preachin' or other, an', for a bit, the excuse sarved his turn, till one Sunday night, he wes discovered behind a dyke-side playin' a card game—"under 7 an' over"—wiv his pipe in's mouth an' a can o' beer beside him.

"Well, he wes blown on for that, an' properly trounced bi the Minister for his conduct, but he didn't seem ti care ower much, just gies his shoulders a bit shrug, and says, "Canny, noo, canny;" he says, "I've worked hard an' full time for the good cause, an' many's the one I've catched haud of an' convarted, but I's like the Colliery," says he, "she wud soon be warked oot if it wes alway full time ivvory day i' the year wiv her, an' it's the same wi' me.

"I'd be warked oot tarr'ble soon mysel if ivvory day I put in a full shift at the Chapel, sae i' the future I'll just keep mysel for annivarsaries,

an' flo'er sarvices, an' thanks-givin's — aal the best cavils, i' short, ye ken."

"Well, that was aal that cud be getten'd oot ov him, it seems, an' as he wes one they darsn't offend they just hed ti let him gan his own gait, an' help them when he had a mind.

"He met his final end, hoo'evor," "Tommy" concluded, "like a brave man, for when a fall o' stone came doon i' that pit on the top ov his marrow he rushed in, eased it aal aff him wiv his great strang back an' shoulders, sae that his marrow cud get crawled away unnerneath it, but bein' left hissel wi' the mass ov it on him, gradually sunk till he wes flat on his face, an' by the time they had it levered aff him aal his ribs were broke an' him a dead man."

THE FLIGHT OF THE LODGER.

Note to
THE FLIGHT OF THE LODGER.

So many words and metaphors in this sketch are drawn from the daily life down the pit that a special Glossary is prefixed with a view to providing an interpretation without disfiguring the text by a series of notes and comments.

"**Marrow, Marrer,**" Mate.

"**A trouble,**" "a fault or hitch in the coal strata of a pit."

"**'Formary,**" infirmary.

"**Gie a big shot,**" viz.: "To bring down a large quantity of coal by firing a charge of gunpowder. In steam coal collieries where large coal is required, the coal face is first undercut, or 'kirved,' by the pick, the shot is then put in above, and a big mass of coal, or 'jud,' is usually brought away by the explosion."

"**A big fall of stone.**" When a fall of stone occurs, those working near will come to the spot in order to give any assistance that may be needed in rescuing a possibly injured comrade.

"**Horny Tram,**" "a tram with four or more upright arms of iron, used for conveying rails, props, etc."

"**Deputies' Kists,**" the chests of the Deputies (overseers) in which they keep their tools.

"**Mells,**" hammers.

"**Tommy-ha'aks,**" tommahawks, a species of axe.

"**Shift,**" day's work. "In a colliery the first period of working is called the fore shift, and the next the back shift, and the hewers themselves are similarly called the fore or back shift, according to their rotation in starting work."

"**Howay,**" come away. It is frequently used by pitmen to intimate that they are ready to be lowered in the "cage."

"**Hyem,**" home.

THE FLIGHT OF THE LODGER.

PITMEN as a class are perhaps an unusually healthy set of men, but there are two complaints to which they are more commonly liable, owing probably to the nature of their occupation, than other men, piles namely, and "the pains" (rheumatic). It was no matter of surprise then, when the colliery doctor sent "Temple Tommy" off to the Infirmary at Oldcastleton to be treated for the first-mentioned malady.

It was well known that he had lately been ailing somewhat; I had noticed myself that he had been "looking shabby," as our North-country

phrase goes, but we all thought to see him back again within the fortnight as bright as ever and with health renewed.

It was something of a shock, therefore, to learn that he was seriously ill, and I determined to go and visit him—to cheer him up if possible, for "Tommy" was a homely individual, and would assuredly be pining, as he lay in the bare and white-washed ward, for wife, and bairns, and "hyem." As I entered the long ward his was one of the first figures I perceived, for he was up and partially dressed, and was sitting by the bed-side of another sick man—"a marrer he had ta'en up wi'," as he told me by way of an introduction—a basin of broth in one hand and a spoon in the other. His face had always been grey in colour, for he had never been robust, and the under-ground life had never quite suited his constitution, but that afternoon I noticed an additional tinge of pallor, and his ordinarily quaint, humorous, and earnest expression was almost hidden behind a certain look of forlornness that was very pathetic.

His ruffled hair stood up about his head in woe-begone fashion, and his eyes, which were those of a child—big and wide-opened—had the same mournful aspect as a child's when caught with pain.

"Sit ye doon, sor, sit ye doon," cried "Tommy," after greetings had been duly exchanged, "the marrer disn't mind; his heid's mendid by noo, an' he likes ti hear a bit crack—it heartens him up a bit."

Whereon I joined the party, and sat down on the edge of the bed next to the speaker.

"Well," I said, as I glanced over him, "I fear you don't look any better yet, but now that the operation has been performed we must carry you off home again, to see if we can't 'fettle' you up better than these town doctors."

"Tommy" smiled faintly, as he took another mouthful of liquid, then, "Ay, I'm ti gan home to-morrow, the doctor says," he replied, "but I doot the clay's ower weakly noo for you, an' the missus, an' the doctors ti do any good at wiv aal yor

kindness." It was always easier in conversation with "Tommy" to adopt his own peculiar language and quaint metaphors, drawn almost entirely from the Bible and the pit. He had indeed coined several words—certain additions of his to the language passed current in Selaval pit village and vicinity—and "clay" was one of the best known of these.

"Clay," indeed, had come to be quite a popular expression amongst us, for it was a compact, convenient word, and as an importation from the Scriptures rather than an impression from his own private mint, had readily acquired public favour.

As used by "Tommy" it signified the body, or bodily health,—in brief, the antithesis of the soul which he was wont to term "the lodger."

"The 'clay,'" I therefore replied, "soon gets limp and slack, but when we get you back again we will see if fresh air and port wine cannot strengthen it to its former consistency."

"Thank ye, sor," he answered gravely, "but

I doot the clay's just aboot through; it's like a seam doon the pit—warked oot; a big trouble's shewed itsel, an' the lodger mun flit. The doctors here will tell ye the same; they're just sendin' what's left o' the clay back home tiv it's quiet dissolution. I kenned aal along that it wes no use us comin' ti the 'formary, for weeks back when I wes preachin' at the annivarsary sarvice I got my notis. Aal the while the still small voice wes whisperin' i' my lug, sae low that naebody else cud hear it—'*Fire a big shot the night, Tommy, fire a big shot!*' an' I kenned for sartin that it wes my last shift for the Lord.

"I felt tarr'ble shabby an' lonesome when I got here, for aal seemed sae furrin' like, an' the clay did nowt but shiver an' pine, an' when I seed a squad o' doctors comin' alang tiv us, I says, '"Tommy," there's been a great fall o' stone.'

"They comes alang towards us pushin' a great horny-tram i' front o' them, aal covered ower wi' bratticin', then lifts poor 'Tommy' up an' lays him on the top o't.

"When they'd wheel'd us alang ti the big chamber where the operation wes ti be done, the clay felt aal wambly an' sick tegither, for there wes nowt there but deputies kists, and tommy ha'aks, an' mells, an' scissors, an' knives, an' poor 'Tommy' bein' sae far from Selaval, an' the wife, an' bairns, an' the coll'ery an' aal, vary nigh dwamed aff. But he comforts hissel wi' thinkin' that it wes only the clay that wes iv any danger; the doctors, he says tiv hissel, can cut and slice the clay, but they canna touch the lodger.

"Mindin' that, I didn't care sae much; aal I wes flay'd ov efter that wes just on account o' the missus, for I wes wantin' ti tell her not ti greet, for that I wud be waitin' for her the other side the river, when her turn shud come ti be ferried ower by the great Boatman.

"Ay, an' it'll not be long noo before 'Tommy' must meet Him hissel—the Boatman wi' the kind an' shinin' eyes that'll be as a lamp across the dark river.

"Eh, an' what a thing it is, Maister John, ti

ken the Boatman—ti ken Him beforehand—sae that ye can just put yor hand oot an' knaa that all's well by His touch, the instant that ye win thro' ti the everlastin' rest.

"Thor'll be nae mair operations there, Maister John, nor 'formaries, nor accidents, nor sich-like, for He shall wipe the tears frae aal eyes when He welcomes the lodger home."

* * * * * *

We were standing round "Tommy's" bedside, waiting for the end; his forecast had proved true, and the doctors, having discovered that he was suffering from cancer in the stomach, had sent him home to die, being unable either to alleviate or extirpate that fatal malady.

The quiet of the room was broken at intervals by the sobs of his wife and his two young children, and occasionally "Tommy" himself spoke in a dreamy way a few words to his "marrow," whose hand was fast in his own.

After a long pause in which we thought he had fallen asleep, "Jack," he said suddenly, "is

that thoo?" "Ay, lad," came the thick response from his mate beside him. "I's makkin' sharp for the other side, Jack."

"Ay, thoo's ap-proachin'."

"But it's aal right, Jack, I's comfortable; I's got Christ i' my heart, an' the clay's nearly done. So long, hinny!" And therewith he fell into a doze. The sound of his wife's sobs, I think, recalled him to a brief consciousness, for he feebly tried to draw her nearer to him with his other hand, then sank still further back upon his pillows with a groan.

"Is there owt ye wud fancy, 'Tommy?'" she sobbed aloud, giving way helplessly to her grief.

"I wud be vary much obliged for a wee suck at an orange," began "Tommy," but a renewed burst of weeping from his wife — it was mid-August and no orange was procurable—at once diverted him from his own torment, and he turned to comfort and rebuke her at one and the same time.

"Whist, then, whist, Mary, lass; thor's no

call ti greet, it's nowt but the clay that's leavin' ye, the lodger cannot die, an' there he'll be ti meet thoo on the other side the river."

The effort had exhausted him; he sank back with closed eyes on to his pillow. Then suddenly he opened them shining brightly and triumphant, and—with a "Ho-way, Lord" upon his lips—the gentle lodger departed to his rest.

How long we stood there in the solemn silence, I knew not, but gradually we bethought us of the widow and the children, and so came out quietly together.

The doctor, I noted, held his hand to his eyes as though he wished none to observe him, and I heard the Vicar, who also had come to bid "Tommy" farewell, murmur to himself as he passed me by: "Verily I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

THE LAST MAYOR OF REDBURNMOUTH.

Note to
THE MAYOR OF REDBURNMOUTH.

In places of an importance sufficient for the maintenance of a Mayor and Corporation, the observances and regulations of the Court Leet were rigidly carried out and insisted upon.

In a small country village like Redburnmouth, however, the post of Mayor was a nominal one merely, though doubtless, as in the sketch, the personality of an individual might on occasion add lustre to the office. He was presumably chosen by the freemen in the first instance, their selection being afterwards confirmed by the steward who represented the Lord of the Manor.*

He would naturally retain his office for a year, and it is improbable that he would ever have been dismissed from his dignified position during his term of service, so that the narrator of the tale was presumably guilty of some exaggeration on this point.

Court Leets are still occasionally held by the Lord of the Manor or his representative, but the occurrence is rare nowadays, the writer believes, and the business transacted merely formal.

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*In the ancient Borough of Morpeth, for example, the two chief officers were Bailiffs, who were chosen by the Lord of the Manor out of the individuals nominated for the office by the jury. See an interesting article by the well-known North Country Antiquary, Mr. J. C. Hodgson, in a former number of the *Archaeologia Aeliana*, concerning the Court Leet and Court Baron of Morpeth.

THE LAST MAYOR OF REDBURNMOUTH.

THERE are no Mayors now at Redburnmouth, and I, for one, keenly feel the loss.

"*Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus tam cari capitis*," I murmured to myself, as, passing beside two fishermen engaged in 'barking' their nets, I overheard the one overwhelm the other with an "as wor last Mayor said ti the mugger."

The Mayors of Redburnmouth must have been as witty a race as the former masters of Baliol College, Oxford, thought I, if all tales be true that are told of them, and I fell to speculating upon the cause of the latter-day decay of wit in

the village. The staggering retort that left an opponent to squirm helplessly, as though upon a spit, before the encircling fire of a tap-room audience has given place to cheap tu-quoque or anæmic innuendo, and the broad jest that tickled either rib has vanished with the hustings.

Upon a further reflection I was fain to conclude that this decay was coincident with the first appearance in the land of "tied houses," and the thin potations against which Falstaff so gallantly took his stand. That, taken in conjunction with the fact that British brewers now-a-days brew their malt from foreign barley, will account for the phenomenon, and my brow cleared, for I perceived the problem to be of the "This is the house that Jack built" order.

Tied houses and foreign barley mean cheap beer and agricultural depression, and agricultural depression means the decay of wit and the death of the merryman.

I turned as I reached the conclusion of my argument, and shortly found myself passing again

beside the barking-pot. One of the men had gone; the other was he who had quoted the Mayor of Redburnmouth, and as he was slightly known to me, I gave him "Good-day," and soon had him on the trail.

"Ay, he was a char'cter, sartinly, was the last Mayor—Bob Gallon, as he was called in private life, tho' after he got his elevation there was no privacy about him ony mair—even the missus an' the bairns had ti call him Mistor Mayor as he lay iv his bed when doon wi' the chickenpox."

"What sort of an appearance had he?" I enquired, "a bit stout probably, and pompous* as well, I suppose?"

"We divvn't call the same man big an' little i' the same breath, do ye? If sae we must just send ye back ti the Collidge ti gie ye a bit mair eddication," came the unexpected retort from my companion, whose fame far and near as a wit was

*To make Straughan's misunderstanding quite clear to the reader, it must be pointed out that as in the Northumbrian vernacular, burn is pronounced "born," and bird, "bord," so pump should be pronounced "pomp." Straughan, that is, understood pompous to be the adjective of pump.

rather due to the swiftness than to the intrinsic value of his repartees, and was largely aided by a well assumed air of irascibility.

"Stoot, ye call him? ay, nobody who ivvor saw him could deny that, but as for his bein' like a pump, wey, that's parfickly ridic'lous. There was once a laddie, standin' iv his mother's doorway, seen him comin' alang doon the street, gets quite a gliff at him, and makes in tiv his mammy wiv a '*Coom here, mammy, coom here! why, there's a man wi' bairn comin' alang doon the street!*'

Jim Straughan rarely smiled; to have done so would have been to mar the artistic pose of the jester, but I observed his lower lip to tremble slightly, somewhat resembling a setter's when drawing closer to a point—and I knew he was today in proper raconteur vein.

I drew out my tobacco pouch, and handed it to him, as I sat myself down against the cauldron. He took it, sniffed it suspiciously, rubbed a goodly portion of it together between his palms, then thrust the quid into his cheek, as he remarked.

"Ye'll be like the rest o' the gentle-folk! ye'll hev no stomack? wey, if I'd a bairn o' my own I'd gie it some o' that sort o' baccy for pap!"

"Well, you were saying the Mayor was stout," I suggested, after apologizing for the short-comings of my tobacco, "and I suppose he was a ready-witted fellow into the bargain?"

"Ow, ay, he wasn't yen o' thae fellers who stand wi' their mouth open like a codling's waitin' for someone ti put somethin' intiv it, whenivvor anyone had a joke at him.

"No, no, he had always plenty wind iv his sails, an' a ship-ahoy sort ov a voice when vexed, sae that it wasn't often he was bestid iv an argyment.

"Wey, there was onst a page-laddie cam up frae the big Hall wiv a letter for him, an' as he waits for his answor he nottices that the Mayor was holdin' it wrang side up, sae he mentions it tiv him. Well, the Mayor just gies him a look o' scorn, an' he says, as proud as a prince, 'Thoo little scrag o' ignorance!' says he, 'an' dis thoo think I wud be fit to be Mayor o' Redburnmouth

if I cudn't read any side up?' Gallon was his name," continued my informant reflectively, "an' gallon was his nature, for he was a grand hand at the beer; no little bit bottles, aal cork an' label, for him, but a right good sup oot ov a barr'l, an' I fairly b'lieve that if aal the liquor he'd ivvor put doon that big neck ov his was gethor'd tegither it wud mak' a monnyment for him as big as Dor'm* Cathedral. It was a fine thing ti see him comin' alang doon the street, aal sails set, bowsprit well oot, sweepin' aal the little boys frae before him, just like flies, an' not even a tarrier pup darin' ti bark at him. A scarlet-faced sort o' chep he was, wi' fat eyes, an' a nose like a door-knocker; one o' thae sort that go pop, ye ken, at the finish, like a bottle o' beer i' the summer-time.

"We aal hed a bit laugh at him behind his back, ye ken, for he was a real comic, yet for aal that we wor tarr'ble sorry for him when he had the Mayorship ta'en frae him at the finish. It's my belief it fair killed him.

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* Durham.

"It fell oot this way," continued Straughan. "There was always a great dinner eftor the Court Leet had finished its sittin'; the Earl's Commissioner cam' doon tiv it an' the Piper as weel, sometimes a Judge an' aal, an' there was always two bottles o' wine sent doon frae the Castle for each o' the comp'ny—one bottle o' sherry wine, an' one o' port.

"After that, they would call upon the latest freeman, or any furrinors that might be there, for a fresh booze—whisky or such-like—an' on one excuse or the other they always managed ti get a skinful o' liquor each at the finish.

"It was always tarr'ble thirsty wark at a Court Leet, ye ken, for the law—wey, she's a proper liquor-god, I's warn'd.

"Well, when the time comed for what was left o' the guests ti gan home, there was a difficulty i' gettin' them fairly sorted into the wheel-barrers that was waitin' 'em ootside, an' the Mayor havin' tried to stow hissel an' his corporation into the largest o' them wivoot ony success, sits hissel

doon on the Alehouse step at the finish, an' calls tiv a laddie ti gan home an' bring up the Mayor's coach, as he called it, for '*damn thae wheel-barrers*,' says he, '*they're no use at all to me.*' It was only his own carrier's cart, ye ken, but the Mayor, bein' always a great stickler for propriety at a leet dinner, he prefers to call it a coach.

"After a bit, up rumm'les the cart, an' wiv a good bit o' heavin' an' haulin' frae the by-standers, doon he flops into the bottom ov it.

"There was some fisher-lads hangin' aboot the public though, as it chanst, an' they think they'll fool the Mayor a bit, sae they oots wi' the aad horse, an' drags the cart up an' doon the village, till at the finish they gets tired o' the job, an' leaves the cart standin' i' the middle o' the road wi' the Mayor snorin' awa' i' the inside, happy as Punch.

"Nex' mornin', when he wakes up, he finds hissel quite in a quandary, as one may say, for he isn't in his own bed at aal, but strandid, in a cart wivoot a horse, right i' the middle o' the highway.

Well, he sits up, an' he rubs his eyes, an' he searches aboot for his horse; not bein' there it was a reg'lor conundrum for him, sae he sinks doon again sayin' solemn-like, '*If I's the Mayor o' Redburnmouth,*' says he, '*I've lost a horse, but if I isn't the Mayor, wey, then I've fund a cart!*'

"Mevvies it wud aal hev passed off wiv a laugh, but there was some two or three strict faced methodies 'mongst the freemen at that time, an' they kicked up such a hurly-burly ower it that at the finish they gets a resolution passed that he wasn't a fit an' proper person ti be the Mayor, an' sae they has him disposed, for, says they, over-lookin' the calibre o' the man, 'Wey couldn't he gan home quietly an' cannily like the rest o' the comp'ny, iv his wheel-barrer, stead o' settin' hissel' up for somebody oot o' the common, an' scandalizin' the whole community that fashion?' An' sae the poor fellow, scarce knowin' hissel' noo that he was plain James Gallon, an' nae longer Mistor Mayor, he takes the hump, an' very shortly afterwards is found dead iv his bed i' the mornin',

an' since that time ti this," concluded my informant, "Redburnmouth has been wivoot a Mayor, an' sae will continue noo, I doubt, till Judgment Day cooms roon."

FARMERS DAMON AND PYTHIAS.

FARMERS DAMON AND PYTHIAS.

LOOKING in at the Heathtown auction-mart I cast my eyes round upon the motley throng of farmers, dealers, butchers, and their dishevelled attendants, and soon espied an old acquaintance of mine, Farmer Newton to wit, Guardian, District Councillor, and, what was perhaps more important still to my mind, the Burke or Debrett of all that farming country-side.

There was scarce a shepherd up or down the vale but he was acquainted with him, and, did you but give him time.—"Bide a wee," he would say, and put his hand to his whisker's edge,—could

tell you not only where he came from, but who his forebears were, and whether he had "a bit" in the old bank or not, together with some little artistic details of the man's private or business career which gave a more vivid picture than any the combined efforts of an Ulster King of Arms and a family lawyer could produce.

His eye shortly caught mine across the crowded ring, and his face beamed upon me at the distance, welcome gradually broadening thereon as the light-house lamp new lit slowly extends its line of light.

I made my way to him through the throng, waiting for the hammer's fall and the clearance of the "lot," before disturbing him, for the auction-mart is the farmer's stock-exchange, and I knew he would be following the bidding figure by figure, comparing the sheep with the prices now offering, and those again with the quotations of the last few years.

"Well, an' hoo are ye?" he cried heartily, as, the moment the gate was opened, he turned,

and, seizing me by the hand, held me at a distance in order to obtain a clearer view apparently, for after a few moments of veterinary inspection, he pronounced his verdict, "Ay, ye're aal right—naethin' wrang wi' ye', save belike ye've been tobaccerin' yorsel ower muckle."

He himself hated to smoke, preferring to take his tobacco "cold," in the form of "sneeshing," off the broad end of a small horn spoon.

"Who's that tall man opposite?" I asked presently, after having made my enquiry concerning "the Mistress" and the "family." A tall fellow opposite, with a short ruddy beard and extraordinarily keen, quick eyes, had caught my attention; he seemed to mark every detail of the scene around him, now swiftly dropping a remark to a friend, now making a bid on his own account.

"He don't look as though he'd be easy to take in," I continued, "but the short round-faced little man next him has every appearance of being what I believe you call a 'mug.'" "A moog,"

corrected my companion, following the direction of my nod. His countenance grew radiant as soon as he saw whom I had meant to indicate, and, merriment gradually assuming larger proportions, he was eventually forced to slap his thigh to relieve his feelings.

"A moog, ye said? well, there's ithers have thought that before ye," and he gave the deep chuckle of inward amusement.

"Well, what are their names?" I enquired a little testily, for one doesn't care about amusing people to that immoderate extent unless with a deliberate intention.

"The names is Demon an' Pit," he commenced with his mouth still agog with laughter, but suddenly broke off, for the gate here opened, and a flock of three-part bred ewes scurried palpitating in. "Whist," he added briefly, "I'll tell ye the whole story after; just bide a wee till I've had my bid for this hirsel—they're a grand lot, the best o' the year."

"Demon and Pit!" I murmured to myself,

as I marked the animated bidding, and the wand of the white-robed auctioneer suspended in mid-air at a sudden bid when just upon the rostrum.

"At thirty-nine and six—at thirty-nine and six—going—go—," "And ninepence," came a spasmodic jerk from my companion arresting the fatal fall at the ultimate moment. "At thirty-nine and ninepence—" the auctioneer intoned afresh, and the whole business commenced again.

"Demon and Pit," I murmured once more. "I wonder what on earth that means. Nothing diabolical, I hope; more probably a mispronunciation merely, and a case of Damon and Pythias in Arcadia."

My companion here turned to me again, having apparently effected his purchases, and said, "Well, that's none sae bad, for I was expectin' I'd have tae screw oot another shillin', an' shillin's these hard times are none too easy tae come by. But ye'll ken naethin' aboot that," and here he nicked me with his elbow, for 'tis an ancient

farmer's affectation that nobody but himself feels the effect of low prices and dwindling trade.

"I'll just have tae be for settin' awa hame, for there's one o' them co-operative society waremen comin' tae buy some young porkers this afternoon. Can I gie ye a cast i' my trap?"

"Thanks, I'll come so far with you," I replied, "and then I can take the train home afterwards."

We went off together to the Inn, leaving his "man Tom" to arrange for the driving of the "yowes" home, and were shortly afterwards bowling along in a smart white-chapel with a good looking horse between the traces, which my companion, having first with all apparent simplicity pointed out his virtues, at once proceeded to try to sell to me.

"I believe," I replied laughingly, "there's nothing you farmers wouldn't sell; scarce wife or child would be secure in your hands." "Well," said he thoughtfully, as he slowly undid the knot in the lash of his whip, "a large price is always

tempting, an' I ken some wives that would be well sold hooever little siller ye got for 'em."

I treasured this up as a "bonne bouche" for Mrs. Newton, not knowing at the time that this was his favourite joke, and one which, when duly brought to her ears invariably elicited the impromptu rejoinder which for years had shaken the vale with laughter.

"But, come," I said, "tell me about Farmers Demon and Pit, or rather Damon and Pythias, which I take to be the more correct rendering."

"What's that ye call them?" he enquired, bending an ear to me. "Damon and Pythias," I replied, "two men renowned in Greek literature, as I have always understood, for the tenacity of their friendship."

"Damon an' Pythias," he echoed. "Ay, that'll be correct noo, for ye shud ken, bein' a scholar belike. It was the schoolmaster gied them the names, but as nae-body else quite kenned wha the bodies were, or what it shud signify, we just swapped it for Demon an' Pithy-

ass, for the one was a tarr'ble feller at a bargain, a reg'lor demon tae trade wi', while t'ither was a fair ass tae look at ootwardly, but wiv a pithy way o' puttin' things that fair made ye doot that in spite o' nature he mun have suthin' inside o' his head-piece after aal.

"Well, them twa's just a pair o' cronies noo, always tegither, an' ye canna speak a word agen the one wivoot the ither takin' ye up on the moment.

"It was quite anither pair o' shoes though at the beginnin' when the littl'un first come up this watterside, an' when Davison claps eye on him he thinks tae hissel, 'here's a fiat, an I'll have the skinnin' on him.'

"Ye see he was a ship-captain tae trade originally, an' had saved a bit siller, an' bein' always fond o' animals, detarmines tae set hissel up as a farmer. He had had a bad illness at sea, it seems, that had affected his tongue a wee, sae that when he spoke it was wi' a sort o' thickness, almost a stutter. That made folk think less o'

him than ever, though after a bit when we'd got tae ken him a bit better we suspected it was far mair under his control than he wud let on tae.

"His farm marched wi' Davison's, ye ken, sae it was likely the twa wud have some dealin's tegither. Well, the first bit o' business Middlemass had wi' Davison was when he bought some cows aff him, thinkin' tae set up a small dairy. He bought them at the mart as "warranted" by Davison, which means, ye ken, that they shud be aal right i' the udder an' quiet tae milk i' the byre. Noo, nae farmer ever I heard tell on accepts a guarantee like yon wivoot takin' the coos intae the byre by the mart side straight awa an' see if aal's correct as on the caird. If they're no quiet, then he gans back tae the auctioneer, maks his complaint, an' the bargain's cried off unless an agreement's come tae betwixt them.

"But Middlemass, bein' simple tae it aal, just drives them awa' hame, an' when he starts tae milk finds oot that twa o' them's just awfu' kickers. It was too late i' the day then tae get

ony satisfaction for't, but he reproaches Davison wi' it, an' says he'd taken his word as a friend for the coos, an' didn't think o' tryin' them at the mart, thinkin' he'd vex him belike by showin' any suspicion o' him.

"'Man,' says Davison i' reply, slapping the other on the back, 'the coos is aal right; it'll be you that's got wrang wi' them. I bet a croon noo that ye thought yorsel' on board ship again an' pulled on tae they tits as thoo' they'd been halyards,' says he. 'An' again,' says he, vary grave like, but wi' a sort o' wink in 's eye, 'coos is narvious animals, an' cannet abide bein' hannelled by anyone that has a stutter o' any kind. But if ye're dissatisfied,' he continues, 'I'll tell ye what I'll do for ye. You're wantin' a horse, I hear, tae ride aboot the country-side wi', an' have a day wi' hounds, noo an' again. Well I've got just what ye want—one that'll suit ye tae the vary ground, for ye can hunt him, ride him, trap him, an' gie him an odd day i' the hay-rake i' the summer time. Its money i' yor pocket wi' a horse o' that sort, an'

as ye're feelin' a bit dissatisfied aboot the coos seemin'ly, I'll tak' five pounds aff his proper price, an' let ye have him for fifty.'

"Well Middlemass wasn't quite sae gleg this time, but finally seein' the horse, an' him bein' guaranteed sound i' limb, wind, an' eye, an' risin' six, buys him for the money.

"Not wantin' him just at the time tae ride, he turns him oot wi' some brood mares he has in a field, wivoot ever discoverin', it appears, that the horse was a stallion. Well, as ye may imagine, there was just a proper Sherrymuir* i' that field vary shortly, it was a case o' dot an' carry one, as ye may say," he added after a pause, his face beaming round upon me—not unlike a scholar's when he has discovered a happy rendering of a difficult passage —as he repeated his phrase with satisfaction.

"There was nae remedy ava for Middlemass, hooever, for naturally he shud have ta'en the trouble tae inspect the horse a bit before layin' doon

* Sherrymuir, a confusion; this is a memory of the Battle of Sheriffmuir, and in the West Country is still used occasionally by the older generation in this signification.

his siller, an' the guarranty was a perfectly guid ane.

"Not bein' the kind o' feller though tae just sit doon an' let hissel be trodden on by anither body, he keeps his silence for a while, ponderin' hoo he might get the better o' Davison at the finish."

"Well," I here interrupted smiling, "I'm glad I'm not a farmer, for what with agricultural depression, and the certainty of being done brown, or skinned, as you truthfully put it, by my neighbours, the Bankruptcy Court would shortly extinguish the promise of my early career."

"Ay," responded my companion gleefully, "nae doot it wud, for, mind ye, it's the same at farmin' as at ither trades—tae be o' any use you mun put in an apprenticeship at it, for ye canna tak' anythin' oot wivoot puttin' somethin' intilt—an' the amatoor gent mun pay his footin' the warld ower. I'm not sayin' tho' that Davison isn't a bit too keen on a bargain, but farmers mun live, an' it isn't aye wise tae tell mair o' the truth than may be necessary.

"Folks are aye tremenjus vartuous aboot hoo ither bodies conduck their business, but i' the long run it's just sax o' one an' haa'f a dozen o' th' ither.

"There's you Bankers, for instance, ye ne'er tak' muckle trouble tae find oot, when a body dies leavin' a bit siller i' the Bank, wha's his relations, not ye, aal ye do is tae bide a wee, then ye trouser the lot wivoot sae muckle as a 'thank-ye' for it.

"The time I was ta'en in warst mysel' was by a Scotch Elder, one o' thae grizzled, godly sort ye ken, wi' their mooth aal full o' special Providence an' the like, an' he sells me a young horse that went dead lame wi' navicular i' sax months time. 'He's sound as a bell,' says he, 'for I've bred him mysel' oot o' a sire and dam baith weel kennt tae me,' says he, 'tak' my word for't that's an Elder o' the Kirk,' an' he looked that pious that I felt 'twould be a'most as bad as breakin' a commandment tae doot him.

"Belike he was sound at the moment just off the grass, but navicular's a hereditary disease ye

ken, like ring-bone, or side-bone, or consumption i' humans, aal it requires tae produce it 's 'an excitin' cause,' as the vets say."

"The heart of man from his youth up," quoted I, "is deceitful and desperately wicked."

"Ay, ay, sae 'tis, an' ye shud ken, nane better," and jogging me with elbow and hand simultaneously, he shook the cart with laughter over the wit of his primæval tu-quoque. "But come," said I, after an interval, "I want to hear, not the deceitfulness of Scotch Elders—that's a stock subject the world over—but whether Middlemass took the change out of Davison or not."

"Well, Middlemass was vary fond o' animals, as I said before," replied my companion, "an' was a bit o' a dog-man, an' breeder i' addition, an' the best thing he had was a greyhound bitch, a clivvor, well-ribbed up, lang-legged bit o' dog's flesh as e'er I saw, which he thought a great deal on, an' Davison, as it chan'st had anither o' the greyhound breed, only a dog, which he always

said was the best i' England, an' wud have won the Waterloo Cup had he had the time tae train him properly.

"Now, Middlemass, as I tell't ye, was a deal craftier nor he looked, sae he doesn't let on 'at he was vexed aboot the coos an' the stallion, but laughs it aff if anyone chaffs him aboot it, an' always is partic'lor civil tae Davison. After a while he begins tae brag a bit aboot his bitch, an' natorally it comes tae Davison's lang ears, wha natorally thinks he has a chance o' anither soft thing on for hissel.

"Sae next time he comes across Middlemass he begins chaffin' on aboot the bitch an' aal, an' Middlemass he pretends he disna ken what he's after, but at the finish he flares up i' a sort o' passion seemin'ly at his bitch bein' laughed at, an' stutters oot that she's the "b-b-best b-b-bitch i' the world," an' he'll match her for anythin' the other likes tae name.

"'Fifty guineas, eh?' says Davison, sharp as a knife, havin' led up tae't all alang.

"'Ay,' says Middlemass, 'f-f-fifty, if ye like.'

"'Done wi' ye,' cries Davison, holdin' oot his hand, which Middlemass, after a grimace or twa, as tho' he was sorry for what he'd said, slowly taks, kind o' half unwillin' like. Davison said afterwards that he was a mug not tae have made it a hundred, but he was better satisfied wi' his moderation at the finish.

"Well, they made up the match for a stretch o' 200 yards on the Fairgreen Haugh, Middlemass' stipulation that the dog an' bitch shud be twenty yards apart at the startin', for she was a bit shy seemin'ly, an' that he shud be allowed the use o' the whistle, tae aal which Davison agrees wivoot a demur, for the on'y thing he was narvious aboot was that Middlemass shud gang back on his proposal. When the day that was fixed for the match came there was a big comp'ny got tegither on Fairgreen Haugh—for we aal like a bit o' sport up this watterside, ye ken,—every man Jack o' us ready tae lay his bit siller on Davison's dog, for

naebody thought the bitch had a chance o' winnin'.

"Three o'clock was the time fixed, but lang before that Davison was on the ground leadin' his dog aboot, an' showin' him aff—everybody partic'lor civil tae him, wiv an eye belike tae 'what'll ye tak'' at the public afterwards.

"Middlemass on the ither hand disna put in an appearance till just on the stroke o' the hour, an' some o' us was beginnin' ti think he'd have tae forfeit, when he drove up wi' his lad behind nursin' the bitch aal wrap up i' cloths, an' rugs an' fallals.

"He disna say muckle, but stan's the lad an' the bitch awa frae the comp'ny on the haugh, then gans hissel up tae the high end, where the finish was tae be, alangside o' Davison, wha had his dog aal ready stripped i' the care o' his son, a lad o' aboot twenty years aad, an' as keen a nipper as his dad.

"The starter stood by hissel', at the high end on the line o' twa posts that marked the winnin'

place, a bit in front o' the rest o' us wha were aal i' a herd tegither there—Middlemass on the left tae the west, an' Davison tae the right.

"Weel, nae suner had the starter dropped his white handkerchief than the dogs started each a cracker frae the slips—but the curious thing was —an' naebody at first cud grasp the meanin' o't—that the dog just galloped straight across towards the bitch—not heedin' naethin' o' it's bein' a race for him—an' almost bools her ower i' his eagerness as he comes tearin' up behind her. She sort o' half comes doon on her hunkers, gies a bit look round, sort o' half surprised-like, an' yaps at the dog wi' her teeth, then oot rings Middlemass' whistle, an' up she loups again straight as an arrow tae the sound, her back bending a'most double an' her legs stretching oot grand.

"There wasn't a sound uttered as we stood there quite dumb wi' amazement, when aal o' a sudden the situation flashed upon me i' a wink.

"'Wey,' cries I aloud, 'be d——d if the bitch

ain't in season,' says I, haw-hawin' wi' laughter till the tears ran doon my cheek.

"'The dam scoondrel,' I hears Davison mutter, an' stands there wi' his brow black as a thunderstorm, for o' course the dog wouldn't run a yard by hissel, but just followed the bitch aal the way, gambollin' first this side an' then that.

"Weel, some o' us thought there wud have been murder that afternoon, an' I b'lieve there wud have been if there hadn't been a lot o' us there tae separate the twa men.

"'What d'ye mean, ye d——d, welshin', south-country swindler?' says Davison, slowly, i' a choked sort o' voice, as he marches up tae him, the race bein' ower, 'by runnin' a bitch for a match when she's i' season?' says he, an' clenches his fists at him. 'It's not a match at aal; it's a humbug, an' a Jew's trick, an' the wager 's aff unless it's won again fairly.'

"Middlemass looks at him parfectly quiet-like, tho' there was a bit sparkle i' his eye maybe, an' he says, 'I b'lieve,' says he, 'ye are a f-f-farmer?'

Fancy that noo, wasn't it capital?" here broke off my companion, showing symptoms of an oncoming apoplexy of laughter, "belevin' he was a farmer, wey, he kenned that as weel as I did o' course!" and here Farmer Newton, by way of enforcing the joke, brought his hand down like a sledge-hammer right upon the fleshy part of my leg.

"Capital," I replied hurriedly, removing my wounded limb, "Capital, and how did he finish his sentence?"

"Wey," continued my companion with a gasp, "he says, '*an' bein' a farmer*,' *says he*, '*ye'll likely ken that a bitch comes in tae season as natorally as a horse is born wi' his ornaments on him*'—Wi' his ornaments on him!" echoed Farmer Newton at the tail end of a mill-race of laughter. "Gox, but he was a funny one, that feller, 'wi' his o-o-ornaments on him,' he says," and Farmer Newton's hand again performed the sledge-hammer operation, luckily to fall this time upon his own broad territory of thigh.

"Well, we aal laughed ootright at that—we

cudn't help oorsels, it was sae comic; for everybody kenned hoo Davison had ta'en him in wi' the stallion he'd sold him. It was tit for tat, an somethin' ower on balance, but Davison he didn't see it i' that light, but mak's straight for him, an', if it hadn't been that we aal closed in roon' aboot him, he'd have struck him there an' then.

"Hooever wi' good luck an' a bit o' management, we prevented bloodshed, an' Middlemass vary shortly drives awa' wi' his lad an' the bitch, leaving us an' Davison behind.

"Well, Davison had tae pay up, o' course, for the stakeholder, wha was also referee, says he cannot withhold the siller, there havin' been no breech ava o' the conditions agreed upon."

"Well, after that I can't imagine," I here interrupted, "how the two became such fast friends, for Davison wouldn't easily forgive the trick, or the jest that had been played him!"

"Canny noo, canny, Maister John," expostulated my companion, "ye townsfolk are aye i' sic a tremenjus hurry—ye're like the insurance

chap wha will insure the bairn before its born. Hoo it finally cam' aboot I'm just aboot tae tell ye, if ye can haud yor tongue a wee.

"For the next month or twa they ne'er speaks, the ane tae t'ither; Davison bein' far ower vexed, an' Middlemass ower proud tae mak' an overture, an' the first time that they did speak tegither after the match didn't promise at aal like creatin' any lastin' affections.

"Middlemass was oot shootin' on his farm, an' sae was Davison on his, as it chanst, the same day, an' a towerin' partridge o' Middlemass' falls ower the dyke on tae a field o' Davison's. Well, Middlemass he leaves his gun behind him, an' gets ower the dyke, an' searches aboot for his bird. Aal o' a sudden, as he comes roon' by a clump o' trees, he spies Davison at aboot 30 yards distance. 'Get oot, ye d——d poachin' thief,' cries Davison i' a heat. 'Axin' yor pardon for a momentary intrusion,' says Middlemass, 'as soon as I get my bird I will,' an' he points tae the partridge lying dead aboot half-way betwixt them.

"'Get oot, I say,' cries Davison again, the black blood surgin' tae his head, 'its my field.' 'An' its my bird,' replies Middlemass, 'sae pardon the trespass, for, accordin' tae the custom o' sportsmen, a shooter is permitted to pick up his game wherever it may be.'

"Well, I b'lieve the word sportsman—recallin' belike the farmer's match—did the business for Davison. Anyway he just claps up his gun tae his shoulder, an' pulls the piece straight at him. "Phit!" gangs the cap, an' that's aal, for by heaven's kind providence it was a miss-fire. Well, there he stood stock still, tremblin', his anger dead as ashes, an' his gun still ootstretched on his arms, gradually sinking' an' sinkin', as the ither walks straight up tae him, an' says vary quiet-like. 'You c-c-coward,' he says, an' turnin' on his heel, picks up the bird an' walks aff wi' it i' his pocket.

"Well, late that night there comes a knock at Middlemass' door, an' ganin' oot wha shud he find there but Davison hissel.

"'Man,' says he, 'ye're a brave one, a fell

brave-hearted man, an' tho' belike ye'll be for prosecutin' me, an' I desarves it, an' hangin' belike in addition, I cudna rest this night till I'd walked ower an' tell't ye my opinion o' ye.'

"An' noo, Maister John," and here my informant momentarily broke off to ask me a question, "What d'ye think Middlemass said in reply to that?"

"Shake hands," I replied at a guess.

"Wey, ye're a clivvorer one than I thought ye," replied Farmer Newton in astonishment, "an' that's exactly what he did say. Hoo did ye guess it?"

"I give it up," I replied flippantly, "but at any rate I understand how it was that Davison and Middlemass became Damon and Pythias."

"Ay, an' ye ken that," said Farmer Newton, "because I've tell't ye."

THE LAST OF THE KEELMEN.

THE LAST OF THE KEELMEN.

At the beginning of this century Geordie Lambert was a well-known character in Oldcastleton, famous at once for his wit and his eccentricities.

He had begun life as "a pee-dee," had worked his way up till he became the skipper of a keel, and finally, by dint of unremitting attention to business, and the consistent good fortune that usually attends on great ability unswervingly applied, had become coal-fitter to one of the largest collieries in the district. Before his death he had achieved the last object of his ambition by his election to the Company of Hoastmen, which,

by the way, is the premier Incorporated Company of Oldcastleton, and greatly respected on account of its antiquity.

With men of this stamp religion is usually narrowed down to some few broad precepts of morality, but it is to be observed that when they do entertain a religious sentiment they are amongst the most consistent of mankind in the support of it. Thus when Geordie Lambert had satisfied himself that the invention of the steam-engine was "agin Scripture," his hatred of it knew no bounds. Horses had been vouchsafed mankind to draw coals to the river-bank; consequently to "disestablish the horse" was an impious act in which he would have neither part nor lot.

When, again, the genius of man further proceeded to apply the power of steam to shipping, it may be well imagined that he would be almost transported with fury.

"A puffin' Billy* gannin' plodgin,'" he exclaimed satirically, when he saw for the first time a rude paddle steamer ploughing on the waterway.

*"Puffin' Billy," one of the earliest locomotives was thus styled.

Foreseeing with his natural shrewdness, however, that it would be certain to revolutionize the coal trade, and eventually extirpate the industry of the keelmen, he decided to retire from business rather than run his head against a stone wall by waging useless battle against the enemy. Even in death, though, he protested against the usurpation, and his legacy of £1000 to the keelmen was the form his protest took.

With a certain grim humour he so devised it that as long as there were two or more keelmen living the yearly interest only was to be divided amongst them, but when there was but one solitary survivor left the principal itself was to be handed over to him on the day of the anniversary meeting of the Keelmen's Society.

This same fortunate individual was to be allowed to spend the amount just as he would; he was to be "tang-o'-the-trump," and the more "hoyting" he got out of the legacy the better the testator would be pleased, for he was determined that the last keelman should not depart from this

life weighed down by melancholia at thought of the triumph of steamers over keels.

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A few years ago there was great excitement amongst the dwellers in the Keelmen's Hospital at Oldcastleton, for the tontine fund mentioned above seemed likely to be shortly terminated.

Owing to the depredations of a severe influenza epidemic the number of keelmen had suddenly sunk in some few months from six to two, and it seemed probable that one or other of these two survivors might shortly join his brethren, for both of them were stricken in years, and influenza is well known for its fierce animosity to ailing and aged humanity.

Both men were over 80 years of age, and both feeble, though in different degrees.

"Feythor Noah," as he was commonly called, was the elder of the twain by some six months, and was sorely afflicted by the "the pains" and liver trouble. "Aad Tommie Arkless" on the other hand, was tormented by a chronic cough

which at times, and in the winter weather especially, developed such intensity as to make it appear probable that death might suddenly supervene upon a choking fit.

In temperament again, the two ancients differed widely, for the former was something saturnine, pessimistic, and uncommunicative, whilst the latter was cheery, laughter-loving, and full of gossip. "Feythor Noah" was tall, dyspeptic looking, angular, and thin. "Aad Tommy" was rubicund, warm-complexioned, short, and of softened outline.

"Tommy" was the general favourite, but the shrewder of watermen, wherrymen, and other habitués of the riverside, who, now that the ancient race of keelmen have so far decayed, also dwell beneath the roof-tree of the Hospital, opined that it was "a shade of odds on Feythor Noah's bein' the survivor, for, bein' a bit tougher, he'd likely clagg on tiv his perch the langest." Still, as it was to all appearance going to be a "near thing," they took care to be equally agreeable to either

competitor, for naturally there was a "vast o' good liquor iv a thousand pounds."

"Feythor Noah," however, being something of a cynic, naturally attributed the latter-day subservience of his neighbours to that "lively sense of favour to come" which is the only return rich men can ever expect to gain, so we are told, from their benevolences.

He was stimulated by this reflection to at once outlive his brother craftsman, and to spite his hospital companions by refusing, when he should become eventually possessed of the legacy, to share a penny of it with anyone of them who had ever been guilty of showing him the least civility.

It was commonly reported that his usual designation was in reality a nickname, having been bestowed upon him some years back by one of the urchins in the building, who, noting that he usually said "No" in answer to a question, had incontinently dubbed him "No-a," and this by

corruption had grown, so 'twas said, into the "Feythor Noah" of later days.

A slight touch of palsy in the muscles of the neck had recently set his head slightly astir from right to left; and this, uncharitably enough, was at once put down to that same habit of his, too long indulged, of answering enquiries in the negative.

The two ancients had never seemed to be free from a certain restraint in each other's company—it was rumoured indeed that "Feythor Noah," having failed in the one love affair of his life, had never been able to forgive or forget his rival's triumph; hitherto there had been no display of animosity between them, but merely a distaste for the other's company. Now, however, that they had once again become rivals—this time for that which, in nine men out of ten, evokes a keener and more lasting passion than ever the love of a woman can create—the distaste seemed likely to increase to positive dislike. Gossips were constantly at work carrying what the one said to the

other's ear, and it was perhaps but natural that these chance sayings should rankle deeper in the breast of "Feythor Noah" than in that of "Old Tommy."

"Tommy," on one occasion, when some sharp sayings of his rival's had been reported to him, had jocosely replied, that his competitor must evidently be losing heart or he would never be losing his temper in that fashion, and added that he conceived his own "take-it-easy" receipt for health to be more conducive to length of life than the critical and cantankerous habit of the other, concluding with an offer in spite of his "hoast" to "back hissel ti win the brass, for he'd elwis unnerstood he'd been born unner a lucky star."

He had even been known to chaff old Nannie Taylor, the relict of a former Tyne skipper, who lived in a room on the ground-floor just below his own, on the subject of second marriage, slyly enquiring if she knew of any "douce, canny wife," to suit a lively good-tempered old fellow with a good bit of enjoyment left in him still, who was like

to have a grand fortune left him shortly. All which sayings were duly carried to "Noah's" ear with the result that they quite infuriated him.

If "Tommy" had exercised all his intellect upon the matter it is not probable that the result would have been so good as that produced without intention by the above careless and playful remarks.

All his life long "Noah's" love-wound had continued to throb, and it was his torment on a sleepless night to think that had he not been so shy and tongue-tied he might have won that which had been for him the jewel of life. This he had secretly discovered later, when his rival's passion in the course of a year or two had sunk to ashes; for he saw she was soon neglected, though never actually illtreated, for it was not "Tommy's" nature to illtreat any one, and gradually he had been able in a quiet undemonstrative way to render her life a little brighter, till somewhat suddenly it flickered out and died.

Still, it was intolerable to him that her

memory should be insulted, for so he considered it, by her former husband's marrying again.

This thought, and the epithet "cantankerous," as applied to himself, amply sufficed to change what had been previously a certain distaste or contempt of the man into a positive dislike, almost bordering on hate. Living solitary, there was not much to divert him from his train of thought, and he grew more and more determined to "pay" "Tommy" for his insolence, to devote himself to his bodily health, outlive his rival, and in some sort have his revenge.

He went long walks along the river-quay, boasted continually of the vigour of his health, and dolefully wagged his head whenever "Tommy's" "hoast" was mentioned, proclaiming it as his opinion that if that "was'nt a churchyard cough, he'd nivvor heord a one that wes."

The days gradually passed away, increasing somewhat in severity as the end of the year approached, and it wanted but a week to the anniversary of the Keelmen's Society—the 27th

December. Thus there seemed every prospect of the £1000 legacy being deferred into another year.

"Feythor Noah" had heard, with a sudden leap of the heart, that "Tommy" had been almost "shaken ti kittikats" by a sudden seizure of coughing; but he had eventually pulled through, and the weather changing from fog to frost, "Tommy's" chances of the legacy advanced some points in the betting.

"Feythor Noah" groaned aloud at the thought of the "unconscionable time 'Tommy Arkless' took a dying."

All he could do in the circumstances he did; he nursed himself with additional care, sat down, and grimly waited.

As he was idling one afternoon about this time, in a small seat in his window corner, he noticed his neighbour next door throw the rinsings of her teapot outside. He noted carelessly that it was freezing, for the sprinkled moisture lay on the steps below him, and he could not fail to see how

swiftly the drops shrank, splintered, and became white.

Just at that moment an urchin came running down the steps, caught his heel upon the spot of ice, tripped up, and instantly fell from stair to stair, till he arrived plump at the broad bend of the stairway.

There he lay howling, for some moments, then as nobody attended to his distress, he thought better of it, gathered himself up and, still intermittently howling, proceeded, with one hand clasped to his posterior and the other clinging to the parapet edge, slowly to accomplish the rest of his descent.

This incident made a great impression on "Feythor Noah's" fancy. "Aad Tommy," he could not help remembering, used often of a fine winter's afternoon to come down these same steps to take a quarter-of-an-hour's walk along the open space that stretched before the south façade of the hospital.

He would go out perhaps about 3 o'clock, if

the sun were shining, and be sure to be back by 3.15, before the chill of the afternoon could injure him. Frosty weather seemed to affect him favourably; snow, fog, and moisture were his chiefest enemies.

There seemed to be every likelihood of a continuance of frosty weather, and, therefore, of "Tommy's" continuing to take his afternoon walks, and, therefore, again—but at this point "Feythor Noah" shied from any further logical conclusions, and it was not till he was asleep that he saw himself taking his cup of tea rather earlier in the afternoon than usual, and, having rinsed out his teapot, scattering the water with a careless hand from his window to the steps.

He tried to drive the remembrance of his dream from his mind, but with a burr-like tenacity it maintained its hold, and when the afternoon drew on he found himself almost automatically repeating the operations of his dream.

The ease with which he found he could hit the mark almost frightened him, and a sudden

excitement catching hold upon him he was driven to walk about in the cloisters to calm his nerves.

As he paced to and fro along the uneven flagstones he noticed a fair-haired little maiden proceeding leisurely in front of him. She was walking slowly along, looking this way and that as though the place was strange to her. He had never seen her before in the Hospital, yet somehow or other her appearance appealed to him very sensibly, he knew not why. He followed her slowly till she drew near to the outside stairs where she halted, and as he drew near turned to him appealingly, "Have 'oo seen g'andpa," she said, "I's to fetch him in, Aunt Polly says."

Aunt Polly? murmured "Feythor Noah" to himself in some astonishment, for Polly was the name as he knew, of "Tommy's" sister who "kept house" for him. "Aunt Polly? Why, where have you come from, little one?" he exclaimed, without answering her question. "I's not little," the small mite responded disdainfully, "I's a big gal now, an' I's comed right

back over the seas to take care o' g'andpa. Mother told me to before she died, and I's given my promus."

"Was then,—can you remember, I mean," replied her interrogator eagerly, "by any chance whether your father ever called your mother 'Bonnie Bella.'"

"Sometimes he did when he was pleased with her, and had made some dollars, but oftener he was nasty and wouldn't speak to us, and he had a bad face, had father, and we were glad when he left us and went away. Aunt Polly says he was a "bad egg," she added confidentially. "Do you think," she enquired, "that he'll ever turn into a chicken and have his neck wrung?"

"Feythor Noah" was so occupied with his own thoughts that he probably did not heed the little maid, at any rate she continued to gaze at him expectantly, then suddenly loosing patience, she thrust her hand into his, crying, "Come along, I like zoo. Come and help me find g'andpa!

He's old, like *zoo* is, but he has red cheeks like my dolly."

The old man followed her obediently, his mind in a whirl. He was once more 25 years of age, and passionately in love with the little maid's grandmother, of whom day and night he still continually thought. She had something of her mother about her, whom he remembered well in her early youth, but she was the very picture of her grandmother, his first and only love; the same hair and eyes, the same small mouth, and the very identical, quaint, arch way of talk.

"Ay, come along," he said at last, as he roused himself from his reverie, "Come along, and we'll find g'andpa.

"You're just like your grannie," he continued presently, "but you never saw her. I have a photograph of her though, done when she was young, which resembles you nearly. Would you like to see it?"

"'Ees," said the little maid in reply. "Shew it me." So they turned, and retraced their steps

to the old man's room upstairs; the little maid sitting demurely in the arm chair, while her companion searched for the photograph.

"Here it is," he said shortly, as he gravely handed it to his visitor, "An' don't you think its like you?"

"'Ees," she replied, after gazing at it closely for a minute or more: "it is; but she wasn't prettier nor me, was she?" "She grew more and more lovely as time crept on, little one," the old man responded, and there was a far away look in his eyes, "but at your age perhaps she was not even quite so bonny as yourself. How old are you? Five?" he hazarded. "No, six," the little maid answered swiftly, then leant back contentedly in her chair, and smoothed her frock over her knees. "I like *zoo*, though *zoo* has such a funny shaky head; *zoo's* a nice man," she added shortly, "and when I's a heiress I'll give *zoo* a p'essent."

"When you're an heiress!" he echoed, "but your father never made any money?"

"Ah, but it's going to be through g'andpa,"

she replied, "he's going to be rich one day, *zoo* knows."

A scowl lay over the old man's brow at these words, and it was evident that he only just contrived to stay his tongue on the brink of some angry retort. After a minute or two, however, the scowl passed, and a smile lit his features, as he murmured, "Ay, thou'lt be an heiress perhaps, little one, some day, but not through him; but what is an heiress?" he asked out-loud.

"She wont look at the boys who has bare feet, and she has hot meat for her dinner every day, and she goes to the pantomime," she began swiftly, as one who had long studied for a professional career, "but come a*zong*," she broke off abruptly as she rose to her feet, "and find g'andpa, for he said he would wait till I'd come."

"Come along then," replied "Noah," holding out his hand, and the two quaint figures toddled off together down the cloister again.

They reached the steps together, the little maid slightly in front, she reached out her foot for the

edge of the step, slipped, and almost fell, for the air was keen with frost, and the steps wore a coating of ice.

Then the old man remembered.

"Stay, stay a moment, little one!" he implored eagerly, and checking her further advance he stooped to pick her up. "Its slippy, an' you might fall an' break your neck, so I must just carry you down so far."

"No, no, *zoo*'s not to," cried the little maid resentfully, "I's a big gal now, put me down at once," and therewith she struggled manfully with arm and leg against the old man's clasp.

The old man, fearful of hurting her, but determined not to put her down upon that slippery trap, took no heed of her appeal, but proceeded as cautiously as he could to descend the stairs. He could scarce see the steps, however, as his burden tossed rebelliously this way and that, and suddenly he staggered. To have released one hand from his burden so as to grasp the parapet would have

been to endanger his little maid, so bravely he tried to regain his balance, and stay his heels upon the slippery edge. One last struggle of the little maid's unluckily supervened. He tottered, swayed, then with arms tight clasped, he lost his heel-hold, and fell heavily backward, down, down the steps, his head beating on the steps as his form slid down, till it came with a dull bump upon the flat pavement at the stair's curve.

The cries of the little maid, who thus found herself a tight prisoner in his arms, soon roused the neighbours, and a small crowd rapidly gathered together. It was a difficult matter to release the little maid from the encircling grasp of the unconscious man, but no sooner had it been accomplished than he was seen to feebly open his eyes.

Some kindly woman knelt down beside him, and gently supported his head upon her lap.

His eyes looked round anxiously, till they found the little maid, who was sitting weeping gently on the stair, "Ay, little maid," he said

audibly, "thou'lt be an heiress, sure enough," and therewith his head fell heavily back again, and the woman beside him alone heard him mutter to himself, "An' now, at last, darlin' Bella, hinny, at last I'm comin' home."

NOTE TO
THE LAST OF THE KEELMEN.

Possibly, by diligent search among the Tyneside watermen a "decayed" keelman might yet be discoverable. The "keel" itself, however, has entirely disappeared, and wherries, dragged by tugs, now usurp the waterway.

"The crew of a keel consisted of the skipper, two bullies, and the pee-dee, who was generally a boy from 12 to 14 years old." (Pee-dee—derivation, *παιδίον*?)

The Hospital was built by the keelmen themselves in 1701, each man paying 1d. a tide, and is now inhabited by watermen chiefly. There is no such tontine fund as that mentioned in the text, but £5 per annum was formerly distributed to the ten oldest keelmen, as the inscription upon a stone between the club room windows will testify: "In the year 1786 the interest of £100 at 5 per cent. for ever, to be annually distributed, on the 23rd day of December, among the ten oldest keelmen resident in the Hospital, was left by John Simpson, Esq., of Bradley, Alderman of this Town, and 40 years Governor of the Hostmen's Company. The grateful objects of his remembrance have caused this stone to be erected, that Posterity may know the Donor's worth, and be stimulated to follow an example so benevolent."

As to the origin of the term "Hoastman," it is as follows: "An Act of Henry IV. appoints 'hosts' to receive foreign merchants in England. Locally the stranger arriving in the Port of Tyne to buy coals was named 'the oaste,' and the person of whom he purchased the oastman or hostman."—

Welford's *History of Newcastle*.

Nowadays, however, it is the coal-fitter or "fitter," as he is more commonly styled, who "disposes the sales of coal raised in the collieries he fits."

A SON OF THE WOODLANDS.

A SON OF THE WOODLANDS.

I CAME upon him suddenly at a bend of the river, and stood to watch him "thraw the flee" for a minute or two before approaching nearer.

He was the best fisher in the dale, and had taught himself his craft from his earliest years, developing his genius with the infinite pains that at once betray the artist and eventually repay his toil.

From the mossy nest on the westering moorland brae where the tiny stream awoke to birth, to the low eastward strand where the grey sea gaped with wide jaw for the brown burn's

flood, he knew every curve and turn—and they are many, for is it not the stream named the Frolic?—the deep holes where the cunning old trout lie concealed, and the runs where the bull trout hide.

The stream here was covered over with branches of stunted alder, and the perplexing tangle of the willow, but it made no difference to "Fisher Jim."

In and out of the maze I saw the long line flash, and the cast descend like thistle down, in a manner that betokened the most wonderful dexterity of hand and eye.

The trout, however, did not appear to be rising, so I had the fewer scruples in interrupting him.

"Well," I said, "I fear the fish are not rising to-day—unlike the Vicar, for example, out of whom I hear you got a fine rise last night." The Vicar, by the way, was not altogether a popular personage in the dale; his piety, though unquestioned, was of a harsh evangelical flavour,

and theology to him was as a bed of Procrustes upon which he would stretch an erring parishioner, wielding dogma as a tomahawk the while the better to adjust him to the couch.

"Well, I dinna ken aboot that either," replied Jim thoughtfully, "he's a guid man, I b'lieve, is the Vicar; I've naething tae say against him, beyond that he's ower narrer tae my mind. Anyways, him an' I, we canna agree."

"But what was the discussion about last night," I enquired, "Did he insist upon seeing you in church?" "Ay, he axed us why it was I didn't come tae kirk, sayin' 'at he always understood I had mair knowledge an' book-larnin' than the rest o' the cottage folk aboot here, and that it was my duty tae show an example, an' set my light up upon a hill, an' sae on, ye ken! Ye'll hav' heard the like yoursel frae schoolmaister an' ithers o' that kidney i' your time dootless?

"'Well,' I says tae him when he's finished, 'An' why is it ye are sae tarr'ble keen tae hav' me inside o' the kirk door? Is it for the sake o' my

soul, or because it wud please ye tae hav' anither seat filled?' I enquires.

"Nae man," says he, "can abstain frae attendin' Divine Service, and neglect the plain ordinance o' the Church without grave peril tae his soul."

"Hoo d'ye ken that?" I replies. "Is it not written," says he, "'Forsake not the assembly of yourselves together?'" "Ay," says I, "dootless, an' is it not also written, 'For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?'"

"Ah! but that refers," says he vary quickly, "that refers tae what things are seemly or unseemly tae eat an' drink. St. Paul never meant his words tae be twisted intae general directions as tae conduct."

"An' hoo can ye ken what St. Paul meant?" I says, "Noo, St. Paul tae my mind was vary broad i' his intellect, an' wud hav' taen nae man upshort for worshipin' the great Architect o' this wunnerfu' warld i' the manner best suited tae his idiosyncrasy. Why, if it was aal priests," I says, "what a sorrofu'

warld it wud be! an' when ye consider, that nae twa theologians e'er quite hit it aff tegither, it's lucky that there's nae mair than there is o' them. An' again," I says, "worshippin' within stone walls is half o' it, done by rote, like the Thibetans i' the East wha pray wi' a mill. There's Ned Reed, the blacksmith, he worships by singin' oot o' the side o' his mooth as harsh as a corncrake; there's the Squire's wife, aal glistenin' wi' silk an' satin, she worships by giving a crown piece tae the collection; an' there's yorsel, ye'll likely worship by callin' yorsel a miserable sinner, thinkin' all the while, maybe, hoo cannily yor strawberries are ripenin'.

"Sir," he shouts at me, "d'ye mean tae insult me?"

"Hoots, no," says I, "not a bit; I was but takin' ye as an example."

Well, ye'll scarce believe it, but he seemed tarr'ble offended at that, claps his stick intae the ground, settles his hat afresh on his head, jerks

oot, "Mornin' Sir," an' walks awa vary stiff an' upright, like a proper pillar o' the Kirk.

"I suppose," I said, "you prefer a quiet stroll through the woods, or by Frolic's side, before genuflections in Church ?"

"Ay," I mostly take my way up the wattorside o' the Sabbath," he replied, "its sae soothin' after the week's turmoil o' hammerin' an' sawin' tae hear the sweet murmur o' the stream through the woods. Whiles it coos tae yor ear like a mistress as it nestles doon beneath a tangle o' green, an' noo again as it roonds a corner it hauds itsel like a lover—jauntily ridin', chantin' his bridal ode, wi' a reckless grace on him, as he gangs impetuous tae his love.

"An' yet, man, there's folk like the vicar tae tell ye that its fair paganism tae walk thro' the woods wi' ideas like that i' yor heid!

"Wey, he canna mind the Psalms, I'm thinkin, nor hoo fu' they are o' the love o' nature as showin' forth the handicraft o' the mighty Builder, for great He is, an' clothed with light as wi' a

garment, stretchin' oot the heavens like a curtain: layin' the beams o' his chambers i' the waters; makin' the cloods his chariot; walkin' upon the wings o' the wind. 'The wings o' the wind,' echoed my companion, "Isn't that parfect poetry, noo? Cud it be bettered? Yet the man wha wrote that mun just hav been carried awa wi' a love o' nature. There was but the twa men i' aal antiquity cud write aboot nature like that—the yen was Homer—ye'll mind his 'innumerable laughter o' the sea'? an' the ither was King David.

"Tae the yen nature was God; tae the t'ithor she was just His handiwork, an' if ye keep that distinction i' yor mind I'll warn't ye ye winnot get muckle hairm by gangin a walk thro' the woods o' a Sabbath day.

"The mair I read the mair it seems parfectly clear tae me that nae man can guage anither, nor has the right tae pass judgment upon him.

"Ye may praise a man for a good action; an' ye may blame him for a bad; tae gang further

than that an' pass judgment upon him is tae soond the trumpet rather than tae tak the sword, an' we aal ken what happen'd tae the 'luckless wight' i' the Ballant wha committed that error. For just conceive, Maister John," and here he turned round as he walked in front of me by the thin margin of the river's brink, and motioned me to a seat upon a grey flood-stone beside him. Now I knew by this token that he was well started on his theme, for a "bonny crack" always drew him to a seat; a man being bound in his judgment to pay as much attention to his intellectual, as to his physical, appetites.

"Just conceive," he repeated, "the enormous difficulty i' the arrivin' at ee'n a decently accurate apprehension o' the warld as a whole! Wey, the mere thought o't is enough tae stagger ye! Nae man is sufficient o' an Atlas i' his intellect tae properly understand it. A geologian may tell ye somethin', an' a biologist somethin', an astronomer somethin', a theologian somethin', an' saeforth, but nae one man's brain is large enough tae grasp the whole.

"An' again, as the warld spins roond, the ideas o' mankind change wi' the seasons. What's blasphemy i' the yen century is "light an' sweetness i' the next;" each age has its spirit an' its belief, yet unsartinty remains for its successor.

"There's yen book I've read ower an' ower again, Maister John, for it fair fascinates me, an' that's Gibbons' "Decline an' Fa'all o' the Roman Empire." The Squire lends it us oot o' his ain librairie at first, but seein' hoo I delighted in it he gi'es it us at the finish, an' the pictures o' the auld Roman's i' its pages haud me i' a tight grasp.

"Tae wor way o' thinkin' they had nae religion at aal, thae fellers, an' what a medley o' character there was amangst em'! At the yen time a strang, marble-browed, warld rulin' feller wud be Emperor, an' at anither a dirty, filthy blackguard o' a chap wud be wearin' the Purple.

"Up an' doon they went at the finish, just gettin' warse an' warse—frae the gutter tae the purple, frae the purple tae the gutter; noo bein'

warshipped as Gods, an' again bein' cast oot for deils.

"An' that's just what I like aboot it aal, Maister John,—the infinite complexity an' variety o' it aal, the life o' mankind just epitomized there, an' each man free i' his religion tae warship as he pleased.

"It's aal changed, noo, the priests tell us, but I for yen dinna quite haud wi' that, for human nature, hoo ever weel they may try an' conceal it, underneath aal it's sloughin's o' habits an' ideas remains the same identical 'handfu' o' valiant dust' it was when the spirit o' life was breathed intilt at the first; ay, just the same, Maister John, as ye mun acknowledge if ye read, an' study, an' reflect without any propositions i' yor mind. An' mind ye, wi' aal this I've nae quarrel at aal wi' the Priest: he gans his way, an' I mine. He warships wi' rites an' ceremonies, an' a fixed form an' rote o' belief; I wi' the missal o' the season spread before my eyes aye hearken tae the ne'er still'd choir o' the woodlands, an' whiles may be I bow the head, but not before dead stanes. If ye were

tae ask me straight oot, Maister John, exactly what I am i' religion, I wud be tellin' the truth maist shortly if I said I was a Pyth-o-grassian."

"What sort of creed is that?" I enquired with a smile, "I have heard of many new inventions in that line lately, but never before of one with that extraordinary name."

"It's quite simple," he replied, "ye'll hav' heard tell o' Pythógras hissel? ye canna be sae tarr'ble ignorant as not tae ken him, the first, an' maybe the broadest minded, o' aal the Greek philosophers. By the side o' him whaur are wor ain philosophers o' this centory? What are John Stuart Mill, an' Horbert Spensor, an' Huxley i' a comparison wi' him?

"They're aal clivvor men, Maister John, dootless, but there's nae originality aboot them; they're just intellectual muggers hawkin', the yen a bit, an' the t'ither a bit o' the wares o' that maist wise an' ancient Greek. If ye want religion gang ye tae Pyth-o'-grass: if philosophy tae Pyth-o'-grass: if astronomy tae Pyth-o'-grass; i' fact,

ye canna get wrang if ye gang tae Pyth-o'-grass for every turn o' knowledge!"

Determined not to acknowledge an ignorance of this Whiteley of knowledge I desperately ransacked my memory, but could find no tally. Suddenly the discovery flashed like a meteor before my intelligence.

"Oh, yes, of course! I know who you mean," I said composedly, "Pythagoras the Samian."

"Ay," he corrected me, "Pyth-o'-grass frae Samos, that's him; I thought ye'd ken him, tho' ye havn't got quite the right classical pronunciation o' his name. Well, an' wasn't he a maist wonderfu' feller, noo? For, if ye foller on his lines, ye can just explain aal the mystery o' the warld an' the riddles o' human life, an' him too livin' aboot six centories before the Christian error."

"Error!" echoed I, started at the side attack from my catholic-minded friend.

"Ay," said he, scarce heeding the interruption, "error, ye ken, meanin' period, well—"

"I see," I hurriedly acknowledged, fearing another rebuke to my pronunciation.

"He kenn'd aal aboot evolution centories before the word was e'er thought of by the moderns, an' it was him, not Galileo, wha first suggested the earth went circlin' roon the sun,—at least that aal the heavenly bodies move roond aboot the central fire, "the citadel o' Zeus," as he caal'd it, i' a celestial harmony. Then at the finish, thro' the lang courses o' the transmigration o' souls an universal harmony will reign supreme, an'—"

"It's a fascinating theory," I interrupted, "but I wonder what I personally shall turn into, or the Priest, for example?"

"He looked round upon me from out the depth of his thoughtful eyes—no one ever yet had succeeded in making him lose his temper—and a sparkle of humour lit in them, as he regarded me.

"I'm thinkin', Maister John, that ye'll appear next i' the guise o' a clegg, yen o' the species o' horse-fly, ye ken, an' as for the priest,—

but whist,"—and here he rose up from his seat, and nodding mysteriously in the direction of the hillside above us, whence a black round hat was visibly bobbing, broke off his simile to remark, "Here he comes hissel." So saying, he glided stealthily along the path we had formerly come by, and I followed, not altogether grieved at being spared the necessity of improvising an impromptu to his sarcasm on himself.

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